This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

**Usage guidelines**

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

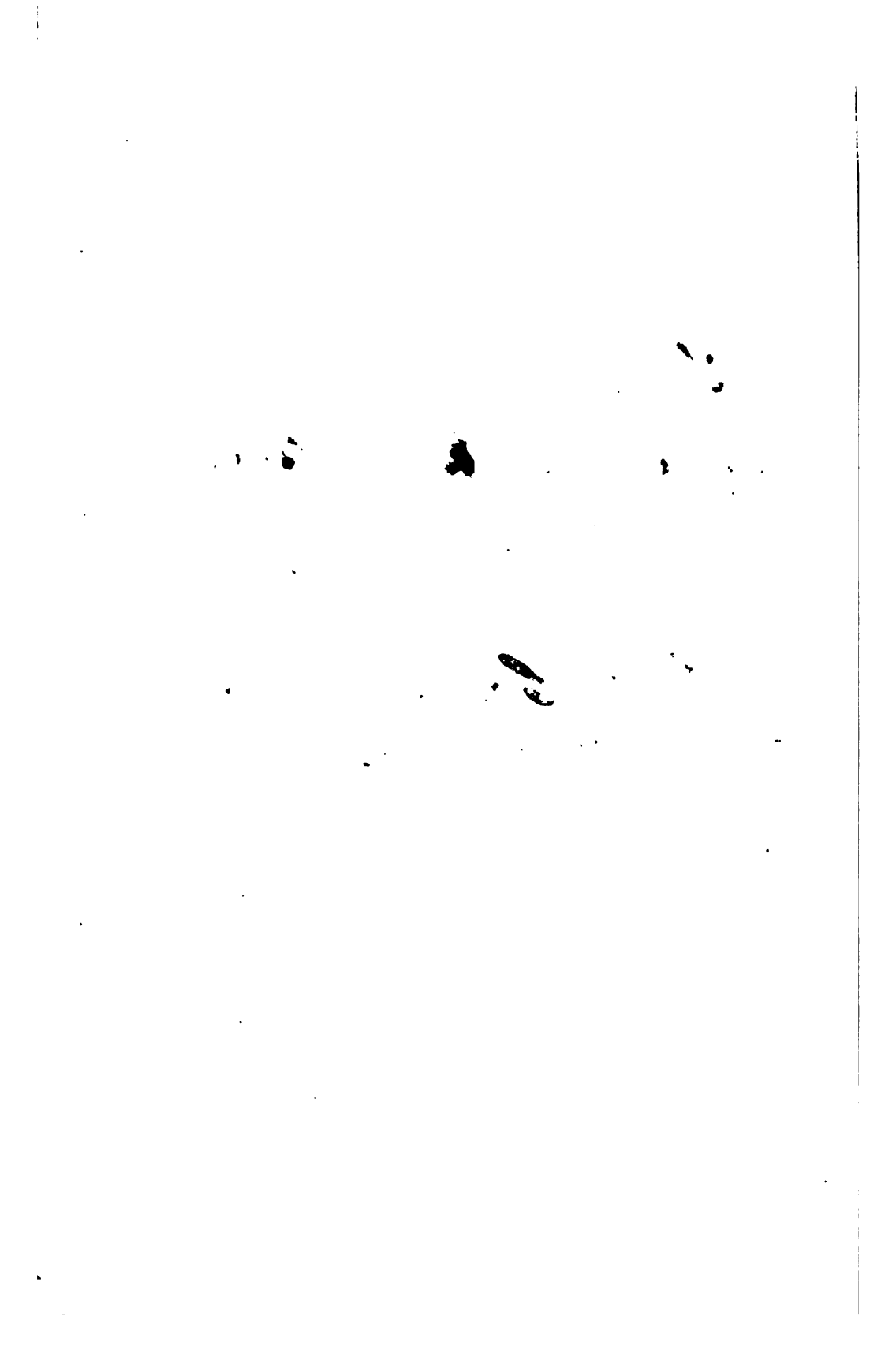
**About Google Book Search**

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NEDL TRANSFER
HN 2VFS U

KF 1943

To
Miss Emma A. Wilson
January 1st 1883
With Compliments



# NATURE;

OR,

## THE POETRY OF EARTH AND SEA.

# Nelsons' Art Gift-Books.

AN ENTIRELY NEW SERIES OF FIRST-CLASS AND RICHLY ILLUSTRATED WORKS ON PHYSICAL SCIENCE.

*THE BIRD.* By JULES MICHELET, Author of "The History of France," &c. Illustrated by Two Hundred and Ten exquisite Engravings by GIACOMELLI. Imperial 8vo. Handsomely bound in cloth and gold. Price 10s. 6d. Morocco elegant, 21s.

*NATURE; or, The Poetry of Earth and Sea.* From the French of MME. MICHELET. With upwards of Two Hundred Original Designs by GIACOMELLI, Illustrator of "The Bird." Imperial 8vo. Handsomely bound in cloth and gold. Price 12s. 6d. Morocco elegant, 25s.

*THE MOUNTAIN.* By JULES MICHELET, Author of "The Bird." With upwards of Sixty Illustrations from Designs by PERCIVAL SKELTON and CLARK STANTON. Imperial 8vo. Handsomely bound in cloth and gold. Price 10s. 6d. Morocco elegant, 21s.

*THE MYSTERIES OF THE OCEAN.* From the French of ARTHUR MANGIN With One Hundred and Thirty Illustrations by W. FREEMAN and J. NOEL. Imperial 8vo. Handsomely bound in cloth and gold. Price 10s. 6d. Morocco elegant, 21s.

*THE DESERT WORLD; or, The Scenery, Animal and Vegetable Life, and Physical Character of the Wildernesses and Waste Places of the Earth.* From the French of ARTHUR MANGIN. By the Translator of "The Bird," by MICHELET. With One Hundred and Sixty Illustrations by W. FREEMAN, FOULQUIER, and YAN'DARGENT. New Edition, Revised. Imperial 8vo. Handsomely bound in cloth and gold. Price 10s. 6d. Morocco elegant, 21s.

*EARTH AND SEA.* From the French of LOUIS FIGUIER. Translated, Edited, and Enlarged by W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS. Illustrated with Two Hundred and Fifty Engravings by FREEMAN, GIACOMELLI, YAN'DARGENT, PRIOR, FOULQUIER, RIOU, LAPLANTE, and other Artists. Imperial 8vo. Handsomely bound in cloth and gold. Price 10s. 6d. Morocco elegant, 21s.

T. NELSON AND SONS, LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK.

# NATURE;

OR,

## THE POETRY OF EARTH AND SEA.

*FROM THE FRENCH OF MME. MICHELET.*

---

WITH TWO HUNDRED DESIGNS BY GIACOMELLI,

ILLUSTRATOR OF "THE BIRD,"

ENGRAVED BY ROUGET, BERVEILLER, MÉAULLE, PANNEMAKER, JONNARD, WHYMPER, EVANS, PATERSON, ETC.

LONDON:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;

EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1872.

KF 1943

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
SHELDON FUND
JULY 10, 1940

# Preface.

THE volume now before the reader was written expressly for its English Publishers by Madame Michelet, and would have been produced at an earlier date but for the interruption caused by the Franco-Prussian War, and, afterwards, by the illness of M. Michelet. It is not for the Translator to take upon himself the critic's office, but he cannot refrain from expressing his conviction that it is distinguished by a peculiar delicacy of sentiment and poetry of feeling, and that many of the descriptive passages are remarkable both for truth and brilliancy. In the following pages Madame Michelet reviews almost every aspect of "Nature," and presents a series of pictures which are seldom deficient in boldness of outline and warmth of colouring.

The Illustrations were also designed expressly for the Publishers by M. Giacomelli; already favourably known to the British public by his share in the preparation of Gustave Doré's "Bible," and by his exquisite Illustrations of "The Bird." Their conception and execution have occupied him for upwards of two years; and he wishes it to be stated that he has bestowed upon them his best and most conscientious efforts, and is willing to rest upon them his future reputation as an artist. Their variety and excellence cannot fail to be recognized by the connoisseur, and they have been engraved

with the utmost care by the most celebrated French and English Engravers.

The Translator, on *his* part, may be allowed to say that he has spared no pains to place before the reader a trustworthy, and, he would hope, a not inelegant version of Madame Michelet's work. He has endeavoured to give a faithful idea of the distinctive features of her style, and, for this purpose, he has not scrupled at times to adopt a somewhat literal rendering. And he trusts that he has preserved the *spirit*, if not the *grace*, of a very characteristic original.

W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS.

NOVEMBER 1871.

# Contents.


INTRODUCTION, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... xiii

BOOK I.—THE GARDEN.

I. THE GARDEN: INTRODUCTORY, ... ... ... ... ... ... 3
II. THE MARBLE GARDENS, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 8
III. THE ENGLISH GARDEN, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 13

BOOK II.—PASTORAL SCENERY.

I. THE MEADOW: INTRODUCTORY, ... ... ... ... ... ... 23
II. THE HERBAGE, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 30
III. NEAR THE FARM, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 34
IV. THE CORN-FIELD, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 44

BOOK III.—WOODLAND SCENERY.

I. THE SOIL, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 53
II. THE EPOPŒAS OF THE TREE, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 58
III. THE VIRGIN FOREST, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 65
IV. THE OAK, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 72
V. OUR ANCIENT FORESTS, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 78
VI. THE LEGENDS OF THE WOODS, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 85
VII. THE KINGDOM OF THE WOLF, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 92
VIII. UNDER THE FOREST-TREES, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 101
IX. THE LEAF AND THE LIGHT—THE FALL OF THE LEAVES, ... ... ... ... 108
X. THE WINTER, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 116
XI. DISAPPEARANCE OF THE FORESTS, ... ... ... ... ... ... 122
XII. THE HALLALI: THE STAG, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 131
XIII. THE ROEBUCK, ... ... .. ... ... ... ... ... 140

BOOK IV.—MOUNTAIN SCENERY.

I. THE VISION OF THE MOUNTAIN—THE HIMALAYA, ... ... ... ... 149
II. THE MISSION OF THE MOUNTAIN, ... ... ... ... ... ... 155
III. THE DRAGON OF FIRE—THE ANDES, ... ... ... ... ... ... 159

IV. THE SADNESS OF THE LOFTY DESERTS, ... ... ... ... ... ... 166
V. AT THE FOOT OF THE ALPS: TWO REMINISCENCES, ... ... ... ... 173
VI. NEAR AND AFAR—MOUNTAIN-ECHOES, ... ... ... ... ... ... 183
VII. THE RUINS, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 190
VIII. THE MEDICINAL INFLUENCE OF THE UPPER VALLEYS—SAINT GERVAIS—ENGELBERG, 199
IX. THE TENANTS OF THE MOUNTAIN, ... ... ... ... ... ... 208
X. THE HIGHLANDS, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 217

BOOK V.—RIVER SCENERY.

I. THE TORRENT: ITS WORK OF DEATH, ... ... ... ... ... ... 233
II. THE TORRENT: ITS WORK OF LIFE—THE AVEYRON, ... ... ... ... 240
III. METAMORPHOSES OF THE WATER—THE BROOK—THE RIVER, ... ... ... 248
IV. OUR RIVER:—THE LOIRE, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 260
V. THE WORLD-CREATORS:—THE GANGES—THE MISSISSIPPI, ... ... ... 268

BOOK VI.—LAKE SCENERY.

I. THE GREAT RESERVOIRS, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 279
II. INTERIOR CHARACTER OF OUR ALPINE LAKES, ... ... ... ... .. 287
III. THE SCOTTISH LAKES, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 300
IV. THE SLEEPING WATERS, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 316
V. THE TREMBLING PRAIRIES, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 323
VI. WHY THE SWAN SINGS NO MORE, ... ... ... ... ... ... 328

BOOK VII.—THE SEA.

I. THE FIRES AND THE WATERS—THE SEAS OF FIRE, ... ... ... ... 339
II. THE CHARM OF THE DUNES—THE MELANCHOLY OF THE LANDES, ... ... ... 346
III. REVELATION OF THE SEA IN THE LANDSCAPE, ... ... ... ... ... 354
IV. THE MAREMMA, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 366
V. THE EXPIATION, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 373
VI. TO THE WOUNDED EARTH THE SEA OFFERS ITS HEALING STORES, ... .. 382

ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 391
ANALYSIS OF SUBJECTS, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 421

# List of Illustrations.

DRAWN BY H. GIACOMELLI.


| | Engraved by | Page |
|---|---|---|
| The Garden, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget*, ... ... ... | 1 |
| Floral Device, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Paterson*, ... ... ... | 3 |
| The Bird's Nest, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller*, ... ... ... | 4 |
| True Happiness, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper*, ... ... ... | 6 |
| Flowers, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard*, ... ... ... | 7 |
| The Marble Gardens, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Méaulle*, .. ... ... | 8 |
| Flowers, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Paterson*, ... ... ... | 10 |
| Flowers, ... ... .. ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard*, ... ... ... | 11 |
| A Sylvan Retreat, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Paterson*, ... ... ... | 12 |
| Salisbury Green, near Edinburgh, ... ... ... ... | *Whymper*, ... ... ... | 13 |
| Under Green Boughs, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Madame Rouget*, ... ... | 14 |
| Palace and Gardens, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard*, ... ... ... | 17 |
| An English Park, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard*, ... ... ... | 18 |
| A Meadow Scene, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper*, ... ... ... | 19 |
| Pastoral Scenery, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget*, ... ... ... | 21 |
| A Meadow, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard*, ... ... ... | 23 |
| Near the Farm, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Madame Rouget*, ... ... | 24 |
| Cows out at Pasture, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Paterson*, ... ... ... | 25 |
| A Meadow, near Brighton, ... ... ... ... ... | *Evans*, ... ... ... | 26 |
| The "Loaded Wains," ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Méaulle*, ... ... ... | 29 |
| The Herbage, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Dalziel*, ... ... ... | 30 |
| Chewing the Cud, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Méaulle*, ... ... ... | 31 |
| About the Farm, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Madame Rouget*, ... ... | 34 |
| A Family Party, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller*, ... ... ... | 35 |
| "Forty Feeding like One," ... ... ... ... ... | *Madame Rouget*, ... ... | 36 |
| The Pigeonry, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Madame Rouget*, ... ... | 37 |
| The Peacocks, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller*, ... ... ... | 38 |
| Old Windmill, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Madame Rouget*, ... ... | 39 |
| In the Green Hedge, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget*, ... ... ... | 40 |
| The Return of the Swallows, ... ... . . ... | *Dalziel*, ... ... ... | 41 |
| A Blossom, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller*, ... ... ... | 43 |
| A Shady Spot, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller*, ... .. ... | 44 |
| Among the Corn, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Harral*, ... ... ... | 45 |
| A Morning Hymn, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller*, ... ... ... | 46 |
| The Flocks Returning Home, ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard*, ... ... ... | 48 |
| The Decline of Day, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard*, ... ... ... | 49 |
| Woodland Scenery, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget*, ... ... ... | 51 |
| Floral Device, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper*, ... ... ... | 53 |
| A Woodland Scene, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget*, ... ... ... | 58 |

| | Engraved by | Page |
|---|---|---|
| The Glory of the Palm, | *Méaulle,* | 62 |
| The Palm and the Sun, | *Jonnard,* | 64 |
| The Virgin Forest, | *Berveiller,* | 65 |
| The Monkey at Ease, | *Berveiller,* | 71 |
| A Clump of Oak-trees, | *Rouget,* | 72 |
| Acorns, | *Berveiller,* | 77 |
| The Primeval Forests, | *Rouget,* | 78 |
| The Satyr among the Vines, | *Berveiller,* | 81 |
| The Woodman's Hut, | *Méaulle,* | 83 |
| Birds and Nest, | *Berveiller,* | 85 |
| Songsters of the Grove, | *Berveiller,* | 89 |
| The Squirrel, | *Madame Rouget,* | 91 |
| A Covert, | *Rouget,* | 92 |
| Waiting for Prey, | *Rouget,* | 97 |
| Attack of the Enemy, | *Méaulle,* | 100 |
| A Waterfall, | *Paterson,* | 101 |
| Early Songs of the Birds, | *Berveiller,* | 103 |
| By the Margin of the Brook, | *Berveiller,* | 105 |
| The Work of the Storm, | *Jonnard,* | 107 |
| The Leaf and the Light, | *Berveiller,* | 108 |
| On the Bough, | *Whymper,* | 110 |
| A Still Pool, | *Rouget,* | 114 |
| Winter, | *Cooper* | 116 |
| Squirrels at Romp, | *Berveiller,* | 121 |
| Giant Trees, | *Jonnard,* | 122 |
| The Old Stile, | *Rouget,* | 130 |
| The Hallali, | *Méaulle,* | 131 |
| The Lament of the Stag, | *Rouget,* | 134 |
| The Mosses, | *Jonnard,* | 139 |
| At the Water's Edge, | *Jonnard,* | 140 |
| The Roebucks Surprised, | *Berveiller,* | 144 |
| A Nook of Greenery, | *Méaulle,* | 146 |
| Mountain Scenery, | *Jonnard,* | 147 |
| The Himalaya, | *Jonnard,* | 149 |
| A Table-land of Ice, | *Evans,* | 152 |
| Headpiece.—The Mission of the Mountain, | *Whymper,* | 155 |
| The Andes, | *Paterson,* | 159 |
| The Sentinel of the Mountain, | *Jonnard,* | 162 |
| On the Look-out, | *Berveiller,* | 165 |
| The Lofty Deserts, | *Sargent,* | 166 |
| At the Foot of the Alps, | *Jonnard,* | 173 |
| The Hart and the Water-brook, | *Whymper,* | 175 |
| The Memorial, | *Jonnard,* | 178 |
| A Hill-side Landscape, | *Rouget,* | 180 |
| The Goats on the Mountain, | *Berveiller,* | 182 |
| Man and the Mountain, | *Pannemaker,* | 183 |
| The Valley of Death, | *Méaulle,* | 187 |
| A Covey of Birds, | *Berveiller,* | 189 |
| The Gloom of the Lofty Deserts, | *Sargent,* | 190 |
| The Mountain Torrent, | *Méaulle,* | 195 |
| The Matterhorn, | *Whymper,* | 197 |
| The Hill-side Burn, | *Sargent,* | 198 |
| Engelberg, | *Jonnard,* | 199 |
| A Mountain Gorge, | *Méaulle,* | 206 |
| The Bird in the Corn-field, | *Berveiller,* | 207 |
| The Tenants of the Mountain, | *Rouget,* | 208 |
| The Duel of Death, | *Whymper,* | 211 |
| Sunrise and Solitude, | *Jonnard,* | 213 |
| A Shady Nook, | *Rouget,* | 216 |

| | *Engraved by* | *Page* |
|---|---|---|
| The Highlands, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Sargent,* ... ... ... | 217 |
| On the Watch, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller,* ... ... ... | 221 |
| A Mountain Torrent, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller,* ... ... ... | 222 |
| A Glen (from a Photograph of the Glen at Lynmouth), ... | *Berveiller,* ... ... ... | 223 |
| A Scottish Landscape, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget,* ... ... ... | 226 |
| The Fury of the Sea, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Méaulle,* ... ... ... | 227 |
| The Shepherd and his Flock,... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget,* ... ... ... | 228 |
| River Scenery, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Pannemaker,* ... ... | 231 |
| The Torrent (from a Drawing of Cora Force), ... ... ... | *Whymper,* ... ... ... | 233 |
| The Young Anglers, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Madame Rouget,* ... ... | 239 |
| The Aveyron, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Paterson,* ... ... ... | 240 |
| The Dormouse, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget,* ... ... ... | 247 |
| A River Scene, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard,* ... ... ... | 248 |
| Wild Ducks, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Méaulle,* ... ... ... | 250 |
| The Kingfisher, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller,* ... ... ... | 251 |
| A River Valley (adapted from a Drawing of a View on the Teign), | *Méaulle,* ... ... ... | 253 |
| A Cluster of Water-lilies, ... ... ... ... ... | *Evans,* ... ... ... | 255 |
| The Brook, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller,* ... ... ... | 256 |
| Cows Watering, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper,* ... ... ... | 257 |
| A Sluice-gate, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Sargent,* ... ... ... | 257 |
| The Cattle Homeward Bound, ... ... ... ... | *Measom,* ... ... ... | 258 |
| The Punt, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Pannemaker,* ... ... | 259 |
| Summer Evening,... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Evans,* ... ... ... | 260 |
| Walton-on-Thames, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Paterson,* ... ... ... | 261 |
| Goring (on the Thames), ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper,* ... ... ... | 262 |
| Pangbourne (on the Thames), ... ... ... ... ... | *Carter,* ... ... ... | 263 |
| Sunning (on the Thames), ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard,* ... ... ... | 263 |
| An Evening Idyll, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard,* ... ... ... | 265 |
| The Fishing-boat, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Madame Rouget,* ... ... | 266 |
| The Weir, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Madame Rouget,* ... ... | 267 |
| Horses at Pasture, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget,* ... ... ... | 267 |
| Lapwings, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper,* ... ... ... | 268 |
| The Retreat of the Ducks, ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper,* ... ... ... | 275 |
| Lake Scenery, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Pannemaker,* ... ... | 277 |
| Floral Device and Lake Scenery, ... ... ... ... | *Paterson,* ... ... ... | 279 |
| A Swiss Lake, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard,* ... ... ... | 280 |
| Distant View of a City, with Rain Effect, ... ... | *Evans,* ... ... ... | 286 |
| Lake Leman, ... ... .. ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard,* ... ... ... | 287 |
| A Rocky Shore, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper,* ... ... ... | 291 |
| A Melancholy Bird, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget,* ... ... ... | 293 |
| A Summer's Morning-mist, ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard,* ... ... ... | 295 |
| The Peasant-girl, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Berveiller,* ... ... ... | 298 |
| Boat Voyage on a Lake, ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard,* ... ... ... | 300 |
| Journeying towards the Lake, ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard,* ... ... ... | 302 |
| A Sail by Moonlight, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Evans,* ... ... ... | 303 |
| Holy Island, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Carter,* ... ... ... | 304 |
| Loch Lomond, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Evans,* ... ... ... | 305 |
| The Artist or Sketcher, ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper,* ... ... ... | 305 |
| Sunrise, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard,* ... ... ... | 306 |
| Storm on the Lake, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper,* ... ... ... | 311 |
| The Ancient Fastness, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Madame Rouget,* ... ... | 313 |
| Bothwell Castle, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Jonnard,* ... ... ... | 314 |
| The Mountain Stronghold, ... ... ... ... ... | *Méaulle,* ... ... ... | 315 |
| Rainbow over the Lake, ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper,* ... ... ... | 316 |
| The Hour of Retreat, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Whymper,* ... ... ... | 319 |
| The Herons, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget,* ... ... ... | 321 |
| On the River-bank, ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Sargent,* ... ... ... | 323 |
| The Water-mill, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget,* ... ... ... | 326 |
| Beware, ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | *Rouget,* ... .. ... | 327 |

| | *Engraved by* | *Page* |
|---|---|---|
| SWANS DESCENDING ON A LAKE, | *Harral,* | 323 |
| CHILDREN'S TREASURES, | *Whymper,* | 336 |
| THE SEA, | *Méaulle,* | 337 |
| A COAST SCENE, | *Whymper,* | 339 |
| GATHERING THE SPOIL, | *Whymper,* | 345 |
| THE SHORE, | *Pannemaker,* | 346 |
| IN THE OPEN SEA, | *Evans,* | 348 |
| A LINE OF CLIFFS, | *Jonnard,* | 351 |
| THE LIGHTHOUSE, | *Jonnard,* | 352 |
| THE FISHING VILLAGE, | *Méaulle,* | 353 |
| VIEW FROM THE CLIFF, | *Jonnard,* | 354 |
| THE FISHING-SMACKS, | *Pannemaker,* | 355 |
| SUNSET, | *Pannemaker,* | 357 |
| THE ARCHED ROCK, | *Jonnard,* | 363 |
| HOMEWARD BOUND, | *Evans,* | 364 |
| THE OFFING, | *Pannemaker,* | 366 |
| ROCKS, | *Jonnard,* | 370 |
| LOOKING OUT AFAR, | *Whymper,* | 371 |
| A GAP IN THE DOWNS, | *Jonnard,* | 373 |
| THE WHERRY, | *Whymper,* | 380 |
| MEDITATION, | *Sargent,* | 381 |
| LANDSCAPE IN NORMANDY, | *Pannemaker,* | 382 |
| BOAT ON THE BEACH, | *Evans,* | 388 |
| THE GREAT NORTHERN LAKES, | *Berveiller,* | 390 |
| THE CAREFUL MOTHER, | *Berveiller,* | 394 |
| BIRDS AND THEIR NESTS, | *Berveiller,* | 396 |
| IN THE WOOD, | *Rouget,* | 401 |
| SHEEP-SHEARING, | *Rouget,* | 419 |

# *INTRODUCTION.*

*This Book, which I have attempted unaided, gives, under the form of a natural history, a whole life of impressions, of study, of faithful attachment to her who seized my affections as a child, and, if I may dare to say so, cherished and fashioned me by successive teachings, by a slow and gentle initiation.*

*This modest exploration of Nature—at first my mother, and afterwards my companion—is, at the same time, an exploration or examination of myself. At each step I encounter the memorials of the past, of its emotions, its pleasures, and also of its sufferings; but, above all, I again pass through my moral education, and retrace the progress of a soul which constantly yearned after a higher elevation, and to deserve to see God manifested in His works.*

*Born in the country, and nourished from my earliest childhood in solitary companionship with the meadows, the woods, and the waters; having seen from a close stand-point that imposing personality, the Mountain, which seems more particularly to approach you in the indistinct hours of evening, it would have been impossible for me to have forgotten these scenes, even if in later life I had always been excluded from them. I have said in "The Bird," and elsewhere, that to Nature was given up my childhood and my youth. Sublime as she was to one of my young years—and even immense on certain days—receding from the embrace of the tiny arms which, in my hours of melancholy, I opened before her, in the belief that I could draw her to me like an individual,—I con-*

*stantly returned to her. I wandered in the alleys of my father's garden; I sought—I could not very well have said what; but in that want of love, of consolation, which awoke so soon in my grave and troubled childhood, it seemed to me as if every moment Nature was on the point of answering me. The shadows which moved to and fro—the different voices of the wind at different hours of the day—the outbursts and failings of the light,—I saw them, and I felt them, thinking that Heaven and Earth had also their sorrows, which they associated with our own.*

*These simple impressions seized at the outset upon my youthful soul, and made my very life. And I felt in myself a glow of passionate affection for things indifferent to most persons. Earth, for example, which we believe to be voluntarily inert, when I saw it steaming under the ploughshare, then growing green with the fine blades of the corn, and opening wide its first April daisy, appeared to me full of good-will towards men, and to give them signs of her maternal sympathy.*

*If towards myself she appeared less propitious, I did but cultivate her love the more eagerly with each recurrent spring. Along with my seeds I confided to her my hope. That little garden with which you have already been brought acquainted, without other ornament than leaves starved by the shade,—how I loved it! How often I sought for a single violet,—the flower which never flourished there! And how often I fancied that by simply looking at a plant I might make it grow, and grow in beauty! My lily, nevertheless, elongated its stalk every summer without yielding me a blossom. No other flower bloomed in my garden but the bright little lady-bird, which seemed desirous of displaying the fine red splendour of her wings.*

*From this corner of earth, which still retains a large portion of my heart, even after the passage of many years, I departed to see other horizons and other gardens, far more beautiful and far more extensive than ours, and all consisting of monuments of verdure. In the eventide, these long avenues, these labyrinths peopled with marble statues, had assuredly a nobler and*

*grander aspect than the little enclosure; but I did not feel so keenly there as at home the presence of a living and active Nature. The regular, trimmed, shorn, and uniform hedges had not the appearance, like our own trees, of having grown according to their will.*

*To the exquisite velvety sward of these sumptuous parks, I preferred the undulating herbage of our meadows, so tall that it served to hide my entire person.*

*The little garden, lost under the deep shadows, had imprisoned my soul within it, and concentrated all my self upon a single point. The meadow-land extending with the broad horizons of the plain opened up to me the Infinite. Yonder,—yonder it stretched itself beyond my ken. After the pastures came the corn-fields, and these in constant succession, never ending. In the vague murmur of the air which seemed simply a caress, in the somewhat monotonous song of the cricket and the grasshopper, I think I should have soon become too much of a dreamer, and found a superabundance of food for my melancholy inclinations. Happily, our desmesne, limited as it was, represented in the diversity of its growth a complete little world. Something of everything grew there. Nothing gives more animation to the Earth, nothing more distinctly brings out its solid individuality, and, at the same time, its mobile physiognomy, changing according to every month of the year. The soil which yields but a single product has not—I know not why—the appearance of being earnestly at work. But when, after the crop of hay which stores the barn, it offers you, in the south, one of mulberries, then flax, next hemp, and lastly herbage, there is no time for rest. We reach St. John's Day with hands full of verdure and flowers. All our labour has seemed to us so much pastime. The sun is never too strong, and beneficent showers refresh the atmosphere. We love to inhale its balm. It stimulates the life which, in July, will begin to weigh heavily upon us. In that scorching season, having suddenly grown silent, we willingly turn day into night, and abandon ourselves to sleep. But the corn-fields now call upon us. If we delay, the over-ripe ear will drop its seed. Nature*

*does not wait. We must go forth, and remain all day bending over the furrow.* This *time the fatigue is great. Man's bread does not spring up like the meadow-grass, under the hand of God; it is the fruit of the sweat of his brow.*

*But in the evening, when the reaper raises himself and looks around at the sea of corn which has fallen beneath the sickle, a kind of intoxication blends with his weariness. To the burnished gold of sunset which inflames one half the firmament, responds the reddish gold of his corn. He feels it bend and abandon itself with all its weight to the arms which collect it and gather it in the sheaf. His labour has not been in vain.*

*Behold it now laid out upon the threshing-floor, while the flails, hissing and groaning, beat down upon it. The harvest will surpass his hopes.*

*Every year, however, does not return exactly at the same hour. Nature, like Destiny, has her struggles, and uncertainties, and mistakes. Her restless spirit keeps us always dependent upon her. Will she give to-morrow what she has given to-day? The sky only knows. We question it, we fear it, we adjure it, and alternately ban and accuse it. That country-life, which you will have supposed to be monotonous, is incessantly agitated by a flow and ebb of emotions, of expectancy, of possessions now realized and now vanished. But if not realized, what matters it? We must persevere, must begin again. And, besides, of the numerous things we entrust to the earth,* all *will not fail us simultaneously. Soon the grapes will ripen, and then the maize; and all the fruits of autumn, less rich in perfume than those of summer, but not, like them, ephemeral. The store-cupboards will be filled as well as the cellar; and down to the latest fine days of the season some treasures will remain to be collected.*

*Childhood is susceptible of but one single sentiment,—that of the festivals which the country offers in due succession, as if to keep us by its side as long as possible. Childhood has neither the prudent previsions of mature age, nor the anxious calculations of the fortune which is involved in each furrowed field.*

*Associated from my earliest years, so far as domestic work*

*was concerned, with our grave inner life, I left home at much too early an age to understand the anxiety respecting probable loss or gain which belongs to an agricultural enterprise. A great happiness, for which I have always thanked God.*

*For long years separated from rural scenes, and led by circumstances towards the melancholy mists, I did not the less belong to the country. Severed from Nature, I returned to her in the recollection of the impressions she had produced upon my mind; I began to understand all that she had done for me, and which would never be effaced. Should I have been so completely her child, if I had never quitted her? Should I have directed towards her a glance so wistful, or made her my study, my life, my* true *life, in whatever it has of lastingness, —which will continue itself, I hope, in the bosom of God?*

*I thought I could recall the past, though immeasurably aggrandized, in the ocean-horizons. Nothing was better suited, at that time, to my secret disposition. All the creations of my early travels, having swept before the infinity of the sea when I was trusting to the infinity of life, seemed to double in me its power. With implicit confidence, I yielded myself up to it. Admiring but not fearing its vicissitudes, I loved to listen to its deep and always emotional, often gasping, respiration. Human sighs seemed to ascend from its depths. Its outbursts of wrath did not sadden me. A young heart finds pleasure in the storm. Moreover, however menacing it was, and fathomless, by studying the regular laws which it obeys I dominated over it. In its day of calm, upon sheltered coasts, full of places of refuge for the life of plants and animals, it yielded up to me its treasures. And then I thought that I possessed them. I was intoxicated by them.*

*But, one day, I saw it in its gloom, and bent beneath the wild current of its tempests. Its perturbation became mine. By all its mighty vibrations I felt myself overpowered. I departed disturbed from the infinity of the Deep, and carried elsewhere my glance. I sought for it then in those peaks which*

*soar towards the light, and know nothing of the heavy dreams weighing on the lower lands.*

*This was for me, as it were, a renovation, a completely new world. If the sea had lent me its mighty breath for my renewal, mingled with the salubrious odours of its plants and the aromatic perfumes of its dunes, the mountain offered me its lighter air, the eternal youth of its green declivities, their revivifying fragrances, the tranquillizing shade of its woods, the peaceful serenity of the lofty summits where the evening delays the light.*

*My husband and I set out with our minds bent upon accomplishing great ascents. It was the sky which tempted us. Could we not attain it?—Then, without knowing why, we halted midway, in the region of the forests. Into these temples of verdure we entered with a kind of reverence which made us hush our voices. Never could we find any solitude sufficiently profound, where we might concentrate our thoughts, or listen to the many things which are willing to awaken in us and speak to us only in the shadow and the silence. According to the aspect of the sky, and the disposition of our minds, we alternated, however, our preferences; we went from the firs to the beeches. We had grown familiar with the latter elsewhere, and on the mountain met them as if they were old friends. Their umbrageousness, full of gleams and rays of light, their fresh and mobile foliage, keenly attracted us. On these days we were divided among a thousand objects. I went hither and thither with a lively step, the dry leaves crackling beneath me, while I gathered the tiny flowers which love to bloom in the free open shade, and apparently wish to disport themselves beneath the boughs. But, from their lofty height, how could the beeches see them? Why do they not blossom rather under yon low oak, which covers a whole meadow, as it were, with its spreading arms? A great worker thyself, thou answerest me quickly: The oak is a rough workman; he does not want to look at flowers.*

*The idea which I had always entertained of the distinct personality of the trees according to their species returned more powerfully upon my mind.*

*Shall I say it? That which at first enchanted me was the fable, the simple vision of young humanity when first gazing upon Nature. That which wakens within us before reason—the imagination—converts into an enchantment its own creation. I was almost ready to believe the stories my little manual of Mythology told me of numerous pitiful metamorphoses which held souls under the bark of trees. We had, at home, many of those trees which one calls animated. Beneath the evening breeze or the wind of night, when I heard them bending, murmuring, shrieking, sighing, or groaning, I checked myself; I endeavoured to seize the meaning of the innumerable words or wailings spread abroad over Nature.*

*And have we recovered from these illusions? When I am wandering alone in the forest, and at such a distance that I can no longer hear the sound of human voices, whence comes it that I tremble at a sound, at a noise which suddenly escapes from the branches or the silent foliage? In the grand solitude, everything appears to me more living than myself. The beeches impress this idea upon me. Under the funereal shadow of the firs, I feel my breathing oppressed. Is it not through the disquiet I experience on hearing them murmur hoarsely among themselves? Involuntarily I cast a glance behind. How alarmed at times must those have been who formerly found in the forest their shelter or abode.*

*But have these resinous trees lost in value through losing their legendary associations? Did they not appear more sacred to man when, emerging out of the world of fiction, he saw clearly the grandeur of their mission, perceived that they were the indispensable guardians of the mountain, and, so to speak, the distributers of its waters? Who is not seized with admiration at their gallant resistance against the barbarous elements? They unite in a compact phalanx, and mount together towards the summit. Our most robust trees, our indestructible oaks, could not accomplish such a task; but, every winter, are crushed beneath the weight of snow and ice; every summer they rear themselves again erect, and in the brief period allotted to them hastily strengthen themselves with a new family of branches,*

*so as to recommence the strife under more favourable auspices. They are the natural barrier against the heavy avalanche. Will the mountaineer, who can do nothing but let them grow, be wise enough, at least, to spare the few which remain? Alas, in how many places is the forest, which once lent us its shade, nothing more than a memory! The grave and noble circle, which so befittingly adorned the mountain, is every day contracting. Where you came in the hope of seeking life, you find but the image of death.*

*Oh, who will really undertake the defence of the trees, and rescue them from a general and senseless destruction? Who will eloquently set forth their manifold mission, and their active and incessant assistance in the regulation of the laws which rule our globe? Without them, it seems delivered over to the blind destiny which will involve it again in chaos! The motive powers and purificators of the atmosphere through the respiration of their foliage; avaricious collectors, to the advantage of future ages, of the solar heat, it is they, too, which arrest the progress of the sea-born clouds, and compel them to refresh the earth; it is they which pacify the storm, and avert its most disastrous consequences. In the low-lying plains, which had no outlet for their waters, the trees, long before the advent of man, drained the soil by their roots, forcing the stagnant waters to descend, and construct at a lower depth their useful reservoirs. And now, on the abrupt declivities they consolidate the crumbling soil, check and break in the torrent, control the melting of the snows, and preserve to the meadows the fertile humidity which in due time will overspread them with a sea of flowers.*

*And is not this enough? To watch over the life of the plant and its general harmony, is it not to watch over the safety of humanity? The tree, again, was created for the nurture of man, to assist him in his industries and his arts. But on this immense subject I cannot dwell. Only, it is our very emancipation. It is owing to the tree, to its soul earth-buried for so many centuries, and now restored to light, that we have secured the wings of the steam-engine.*

*Thank Heaven for the trees! In this book, and with my feeble voice, I claim for them the gratitude of man. Let other writers of greater authority come to their assistance, and restore them to the earth, before she is utterly stripped, before she becomes an arid and uninhabitable desert.*

*One day, as, seated before a forest of firs already marked for the axe, I was lost in a sad and silent dream, another dreamer, who could well interpret my thoughts, told me that he came from the Engadine, the most elevated and the coldest region of Switzerland, where the fir ceases to grow, where the larch can barely live, but where the arolla prospers, and hardily plants its roots on the edges of the glacier. It is a hero! I exclaimed; we are here in Switzerland, and should we not see it? You must make all possible haste, replied the stranger. In the war which man has declared against the Tree, the last of the arollas will soon have disappeared.*

*This tour inspired me by anticipation with a kind of ecstasy. I was going to see those magnificent pines, those intrepid wrestlers, which will not permit their branches to droop in tears like the firs; but rear them aloft, towards the sky, and illuminate winter, under the rime and the ice, with magnificent candelabra. I was going, too—a rare felicity!—to dwell among the glaciers. At the Grindelwald, and at Chamounix, I had seen but little of them. At Pontresina, where we intended to reside, I should be able at my leisure to contemplate them. They would be almost set within the framework of our windows. Who knows but that I might be permitted to walk on the Mer de Glace? Never had I felt myself more bold. Then, too, they promised us such a wealth of flowers! And the rarest flowers; such as we could not obtain elsewhere. In the Engadine they offer themselves to your hand! What subjects of study, and what impressions, I should bring back from so new a scene, from so lofty an elevation! While we were ascending the Julier, bursts of joy escaped me every moment; I was unable to repress them.*

*In these elevated regions, the sun which smites the earth so strongly, and brings forth in a few days the carpet of flowers*

*in its richest colours, does not seem, nevertheless, to be a summer sun. It may be said that beyond this beautiful sward nothing seeks its heat, for it does but wither. The arolla dreads instead of desiring it. Considering the complexion of the sky, the frigidity of the atmosphere, the silence which extends in every direction, you doubt whether it is spring, though you are in the middle of July.*

*The cold which tempers and hardens the strong, over-stimulates the weak. They are fain to do something, to expend their energies; but lo, at this elevation of six thousand feet, there is no longer the attraction of summit-climbing. Every peak seems easy of access. One, however, is ten thousand feet in height, and they think they have not ascended it. From such an altitude, at all events, can you not realize what you seek,—the two infinities, the sky now so near you, and, beneath, the open abyss? No; they have started from a sufficient depth, and they have not yet risen to a sufficient height. All around is a fleecy sea of granite.*

*I have related elsewhere, in another book ("Neiges et Fleurs"), one of the excursions which I made, accompanied only by my old guide Colani, in one of the lateral valleys unvisited by the tourist, where one expects to discover the unknown. If under a sky black with accumulated snows the most radiant horizons veil themselves in gloom, what, then, must be the case when the sinister shadows fall on a field of ruins; when the keen north wind hisses from above? Yet it is this which tempts you. To confront the wind, to strive against obstacles; to be a woman, and weak, and yet alone—lost in the desert—so high, so far! Your heart beats with a strange joy, a joy almost savage. To have nothing but the free space between God and your soul, and to feel as if one had acquired wings!—The ecstasy is pure and delightful; but it is brief. Can you easily ascend from this point? Ah, how the leaping heart already contracts, and the power of respiration seems to fail you!—Yonder green glacier, gazing at me with its fixed dull eye, perturbs me. The stones which, minute after minute, it flings at my feet, threaten to crush me. From its massive*

*bulk issue at intervals the most frightful detonations. They proceed from abysses opening in its sides. If I essayed to explore them, would they not seek to engulf me? What I supposed to be peace was but a treacherous immobility. What I thought to be an increase of life, would speedily prove my death. The air which, at a lower level, nourished me, is here too rarefied, and I find it difficult to breathe. I feel my head grow heavy and my eyes dim. I hoped to see the sky open, and saw only darkness.*

*No: God has not erected His temple there. Nature, which everywhere else is our mother, here seems to be our enemy. The scene is too powerful for the gaze, its mystery is too terrible, its labour too overwhelming. It would fain be alone. Lower down it is, that it pleases to reveal to us whatever it conceals of life, and of renewal for the world,* under *this apparent death and hostility.*

*Let us return to those middle regions, which we ought never to have quitted.*

*We had scarcely descended before the mountain already began to make us feel the infinite gentleness of those little sheltered recesses which the wind never disturbs, and where the captive waters issue from the sides of the rock. These, coming from the interior, from hidden reservoirs, are discreet springs which do but murmur lowly, while in the ravine which it hollows, the torrent has already gained a voice.*

*On either side of the path some snow is still adhering, though thawing slowly. Whistling noises waken beneath the young herbage. Suppose we halt here for a moment to look behind? Behold yon glaciers which you feared for me, and which I myself at last learned to fear! See now how naturally they seem to descend the mountain! One might speak of them as rivers sprung from an invisible sea, and which, down the abrupt descents, sweep in whirling masses, like the* rapids, *those noble rivers of the New World. And, in effect, they* are *waters in motion. They would have flowed at one time, if the cold had not arrested their waves, and checked their onset. But it could not completely immobilize them. The glacier goes on its*

*way; it accommodates itself to the windings of the mountain, like the rivers of the plains when impeded by obstacles. Only, it requires thirty or forty years to descend from the summit to the valley. How fortunate this slowness of course, which every summer provides the earth with refreshment, just at the time the springs are on the point of exhaustion.*

*But if the meadows here are rich in flowers, trees are rare. One feels that they dread in their elevated atmosphere the abrupt variation of the daily temperature, the wreaths of air frozen in the corridors through which the avalanches descend. Every night the chilly mist brings winter back to them. The waters intended for onward movement seem to hesitate. A great silence prevails; against the blackened sky, the gloomy mountain rears its bulk. There is no sleep; though no spectacle can be grander than the mountains sleeping. At these heights, however, life is uncertain. Our own, already affected, would speedily be diminished.*

*But on the declivities where sunshine and shadow mingle, —where the birch, by lending to the fir the protection of its foliage, enables it still to descend,—it is there, we are told, that man can dwell.*

*And a hundred voices invite us thither.*

*Since that day we have never ascended to these sublime heights; we have contented ourselves with looking at them from a distance. They have not the less powerfully elevated and kept up my heart.*

*Every summer we have returned thither, loyal and grateful to that which renews our soul as well as our physical strength. By traversing in every direction this portion of the mountain, by pausing for days and hours in the shade of the ravines, above the torrents, on the brink of the cascades, at the starting-point of the fountains, I have succeeded, perhaps, in catching the meaning of some of the many things uttered by the waters in their light humming noises, their confidential dialogues, and, so to speak, their whispers. And as to those which roll resound-*

*ingly, and which seem our answer in the depth of the echoes, is it more easy to comprehend them?*

*The mountain here is all full of life and animation; yet it is not without its melancholy, nor even without its sadness. If its waters warble and sing, its black firs do nothing but wail. What tears in its cascades! What storms in those impetuous torrents! It is this which attracts and fascinates me. Here I no longer feel myself alone. My thought seems every moment to converse with a person which listens and replies to it.*

*Is there not between us a still greater intimacy? These murmurs of the air, the water, the foliage; these gaieties of the morning hour; these warm evening mists above the sapphire lakes; these dreams of the night; these deep or vague sighs which Nature utters;—are not they within* myself?

*The sea opened up to my gaze the immensity; but she held me rooted to the shore, she put off the fulfilment of her promises. In the face of the Infinity which I had thought to embrace, I felt myself for ever a prisoner on its strand—my feet wounded with its rolling pebbles, my heart disturbed by its sudden outbursts of anger. Its bitter and polluted flood could not quench my thirst. I sought for fresh, living springs—and here I have found them. They flow freshly and abundantly, and in a hundred different ways. Now, did not Ocean, with its boundless horizons, seem somewhat uniform? Its waves, blue or green, in its days of genial mood—foaming and frothing when it is vexed and angry—spite of their variations of colour and movement, gave to the mind the idea of an identical force. Are not these waves always the same, and, if I may dare to say so, monotonous in their majestic fulness?*

*On the mountain every object differs from one another. At the outcome of the waters, each has its own physiognomy and its own language. The declivities, the ravines, the projecting rocks,—all concur to vary their appearance, to divide them, and disperse them in the most felicitous manner possible over the landscape. If you grow weary of the impetus of the torrent, yonder it proceeds to hide itself, and you need hear it no more. Or, again, the passing and repassing wind*

*carries away or brings back its noises, and changes their effect upon your ear.*

*Then, cascades,—brooks,—fountains! According to the day or the hour, they have assumed a new accent, and speak to you in a different tongue. The melancholy cascade which, in the beautiful weather of yesterday, languished and whispered lowly, this morning, after a night of tempest, has suddenly become disturbed and angry. While, this evening, it will leap forth hardily and eagerly, sparkling with light.*

*All these waters, changing according to the caprices of the weather, now flowing gently, now leaping and bounding, chase each other on the surface of the earth, glassing it in their temporary mirrors, and seeming also to inspire it with a rapid and joyous life. We see it sweep along the meadows, traverse the woods, and invest them with that intense verdure which is so pleasing to our eyes. We feel the beginnings of its life; it springs towards an older and a weary world; it endows Europe, yearly, with the gift of youth and fertility. The mountain will treasure up for it its dews, its mists, the humidity of its forests, the great electric rains which from to-day until to-morrow keep the meadows in bloom. All the rest wanders afar, bids farewell to the mighty summits, and descends towards the pastures.*

*Through this march and this concert of the waters, our Alps bring us acquainted with an episode of the great circulation which traverses the Earth, and incessantly renews itself, to the advantage of Earth's children.*

*When I saw all these waters hurrying forward in their delightful course, I thought I too was living a twofold life. In spite of the wounds my heart received in the rough and thorny ways, I mounted, eager and active, with all the ardour of my young years. I forgot that already they had left their traces; I forgot the lassitudes and vain regrets of the past. Was I not conscious of other joys and other hopes awaking within me? Below, and already beyond the declivity which*

*embraces the two horizons of life, I had lost the charming vision of the long ago. On the other side of the hill I could see the evening shadows approaching with rapid steps. But here I am hovering still—and my gaze discovers nothing of the Future but its serene radiance, and the promises which are never false. Now, without fear, I may descend. My heart, undoubtedly, will still be called upon to suffer greatly; but will never again be tortured with the empty sorrows and bitternesses of doubt. The Nature which I have loved so long, has granted me at length the gift of perceiving God.*

*On warm and breezeless mornings I preferred to attempt no ascent, but to profit by the fresh airs of the torrent. In society, engaged in pleasant conversation, the fountain and the stream arrest your steps very willingly. They seem, too, as if they also prattled. Their silvery voices, their lively gurglings, mingle aptly with our laughter.*

*But the solitary Thought prefers to listen to the deep, masculine voice of the torrent, as it labours and struggles to work out its channel. This image of enthusiastic passionate labour furnishes me with a good example. Like it, my path is impeded by many rocks and obstacles.*

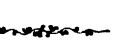
*With such speed it descends, and impels its waters, that it cannot carry them onwards in a single rush, but leaves some of them behind, among enormous blocks, which vex them into wild whirls and eddies, and which they wind around in light cascades. They are like pearls let loose from their thread. Others seem as if they would willingly halt altogether; and we see them advance no further. These waters lingering on the brink of so vast a movement, produce, at times, a singular effect upon you. Gradually you fancy you see in them* eyes, *which cling to you with a fixed gaze. And these eyes, under the gloom of ash and elm, assume a mysterious greenish glare. They do not quit you. This can be but a mirage, I know, and yet it has involved me in a kind of dream. I long to descend,—to see it lower down, and much more closely; but what if the*

*floating plants which seem like tresses should conceal a snare? What if the malicious and dangerous fairy, the emerald-tressed Ondine, entangled me in the vertigo of her perilous circles? It is said that she possesses her full powers only at night, when, by the magic touch of her light fingers, she softly attracts you while sleeping, and leads you towards the slippery bank. You yield, you sink; while she, suspended to the branches of the elms, balances herself lightly, and laughs aloud. But why be alarmed? It is now full moon. No; here, under these ash-trees, reign the doubtful pallors of the twilight.*

*Better would it be, nevertheless, to seat myself near the torrent which rolls yonder the waters of the blue glacier. Owing to the azure vapours, the whole of this side is soft and vaporous. There, too, I have often noticed pale-blue melancholy eyes regarding me. But* these *affected without ever troubling me. They are the eyes of the Nix. She loves to abide in the neighbourhood of the myosotis, which seems to retain her tears. And is it not this flower which speaks for her, and betrays her secret wish,—"Forget me not"?*

*Is it a dream? I seem to have heard a voice issuing, as it were, from beneath the grass. Has it not told me to take care and not be over-trustful? "She who apparently asks nothing from you, in the silent language of her flower conceals a more certain and more perfidious snare. She waits until you have abandoned yourself to her slow fascination. The cold Nix who has no soul seeks your own, to waken and animate her life. And yonder, too, the bank is slippery."....*

*It is well to arouse one's-self from this unwholesome reverie, and rediscend towards the light. The stream which first excited and elevated me has, at length, with its contentious sound and thunderous voice, broken the train of my thought. I can no longer bear it; I yield to the treacherous vision.*



*But lo, the torrent, swollen with all the waters of the mountain, and already assuming the dimensions of a river, has suddenly broadened into a beautiful placid lake, where the*

*heaven deepens its sapphire, where the landscape reverses its meadows, its houses, its spires, and its woods, and contemplates itself leisurely for the first time. It seems as if, the better to reflect its images, the waters have ceased to move, and have contented themselves with becoming a vast and splendid mirror.*

*"Suppose we halt here: dost thou not feel, as I do, that such places as these possess a serene virtue?" What phantoms could survive in so full a radiance? Let joy return to us with the light. To-morrow, perhaps, we shall regret our shadows, and seek anew some retired mountain-nook which guards oblivion for us. But to-day I feel a desire to expand my soul, to enjoy, so to speak, a festival of Nature; and to see the sky everywhere, both above my head and under my feet.*

*I have said in my Book that these are beautiful basins, wisely guarded by the mountain-ring; reservoirs of great waters, which husband them not less carefully than does the glacier, their eternal source.*

*But these waters do not refresh and quench the thirst of Earth alone, in the burning hours. The stranger who, however weary and wasted may be his heart, stoops down and drinks of them, quickly feels that he has drunk of living springs. He rises renewed, and sets out, like the river, stronger and more powerful.*

*The beauty of those lakes, where the shores mirror their outline in the waters, lies in themselves, and in their variety. Nature never copies herself. Her object is always the same; but the means by which she seeks to attain it are always different. According to countries or localities, she charms and surprises you by some unexpected novelty.*

*Without going so far as the majestic lakes of North America, or the perishing and deceitful lakes of Asia, or the drowsy marshes of Africa, which I have attempted to depict, our Europe, in the Alps, in Scotland, in England, on the granitic table-lands of Sweden, offer us hundreds of lakes which have no similarity to one another, and which we love to visit at different seasons of the year and of life.*

*Some of these relate to you the history of the past of Earth,—*

*the past which she renews in our own days, when the concealed forces of the sea throw up the young worlds as islands, or massed together in great table-lands (Sweden). Others, encircled by silent rivers, display on the grave surface of their waters the gloomy phantasmagoria of the Northern mists. On those shores where humanity so long developed its rapid action, where life never seemed more real, Fiction, in its terrors or its charms, blends everywhere with History (the Scottish Lakes). In the Swiss Alps this or that lake is the epopœa of Nature, its heroic poem (Lucerne). Another represents its grace and enchantment,—a mobile and changeful grace in its waters, a beauty frequently sublime in the setting which Nature has given them. A patient and admirable artist, she has modelled and bent its outlines so as to lend to her lake its beautiful, living, unique, and completed form. Do I need to name that which has so often entranced me, and towards which we shall soon bend our steps,—the Lake of Geneva?*

*Many of these beneficent reservoirs are no more,—have left their basin empty. Earth, too, has had to reckon with Time. Its veins seem impoverished. The play of its circulation is slackened here, and there completely stopped. The empty Pyrenean cirques bear witness to this fact, and the levelled bed of so many valleys, where formerly the waters descended as by a succession of sluice-gates. They flow no longer, or they wander vaguely and slothfully, seeking only for the end.*

*Hence arises the melancholy of Earth, and its too visible decay, in many regions where everything calls out for life,—the genial climate, the stimulus of a sunny heaven. But where water is wanting, heat becomes a foe. I stoop, I listen, but no longer catch those subdued murmurs, those tricklings of the water which once charmed my ear. You might speak of Nature as dead. A dry wind has replaced the fresh breeze; the woods where it loved to wander at eve, the meadows where it freely disported,—what has become of them? The sky smiles ever upon Earth, but Earth does not respond.*

*Under the gray veil of the reedy marsh, she languishes, half suffocated. She entreats us—the poor mute—by her*

*suffering grace; she asks of us air and light, for she would fain breathe.*

*I had hoped to have finished at Paris this volume, commenced in the treacherous calm which precedes the storm; rudely interrupted by the frightfulness of a mighty catastrophe. Circumstances have willed it otherwise; and I have brought it to a close at a distance from my country and my home, in the neighbourhood of the Italian sea.*

*It was a great and painful effort to persevere in my labour after such a shipwreck! Yet I must needs go on, for I had promised.*

*Frequently the tears, while I wrote, have dimmed my sight, and dropped upon these last pages.—I dedicate them, in all their melancholy, to those who have been tried in the furnace,—to all stricken and wounded souls.*

*Across so much gloom, however, I have essayed to cast a few rays of light. Nature is serious; but she is serene. I have desired to imitate her, and avoid all purely sterile and desolate sorrows. In the midst of death, I have sought to affirm the existence of life. True grief is fertile. It enlarges our hearts.*

*Florence, June* 1871.

THE GARDEN

## CHAPTER I.

### THE GARDEN: INTRODUCTORY.

THE Garden! How many meanings in that one single word! How many interpretations have been given to it!

But remember that the Garden which our hearts really love is no vast space in which the vision is utterly lost, but rather that limited enclosure which retains the soul half-captive; its concentration acts all the more powerfully as an inspiration, and lends wings to our dreams.

A limited enclosure, and even something less. Who does not remember the pathetic history of the prisoner of Fenestrella, all whose garden was a tiny lowly herb, which had sprung up between two stones in the lonely courtyard? And this herb took entire possession of him, linked him to heaven and space, and so firmly held his soul that even liberty would have been nothing to him without it.

What more could he need? He who has loved

most truly, he it is who alone has thoroughly comprehended the *povera Picciola.*

Fortune does not allow all of us to see the globe,—the wide, wide world. But all of us may wander in this garden,—the miniature of a

world, which furnishes us with a little turf, a limited degree of cultivation, something of the shade of woods and the freshness of waters,—sometimes the sweet illusion of a fair perspective,—and the vague uncertain murmur as of distant seas and dying waves.

I do not speak here of those monumental gardens which are the pride of great cities; or, rather, their saloons, given up to noisy and thoughtless crowds. Much more heartily do I love that little plot of ground of which Virgil speaks; the quiet retreat of the good old man to whom War had left but a small portion of his demesne, and that not the best. Yet not the less did it contain everything,—the agreeable and the useful,—grass, vegetables, fruits, and even bees, with a few tall and venerable trees, rich in so many pleasures for him who sat beneath their shade.*

* [Madame Michelet alludes to Virgil's first Eclogue:—

" O fortunate old man! whose farm remains
For you sufficient, and requites your pains.....
Behold yon bordering fence of sallow trees
Is fraught with flowers, the flowers are fraught with bees:

Those great and noble trees, in the potent magic of sunshine and shadow, possess all the charms of memory. How many souls, souls (as we feel) akin to our own, have passed away, never to return again! In spite of ourselves we dream of them: all life seems informed with regret.

But sweet friendships are more easily formed with secondary and less imposing lives—with lives, that is, within our own range of sympathy. The fruit-tree which mounts no higher than ourselves, and droops its fruit into our grasp,—and, still lower, the humble flowers of the field,—these are our true friends. And the latter,—so small and so exquisite!—seem to breathe forth in their fragrance the subtle soul of the earth; one might almost say, its *thoughts*.

The famous "Paradises" of Persia were no more than this,—an agreeable confusion of fruit and flower.

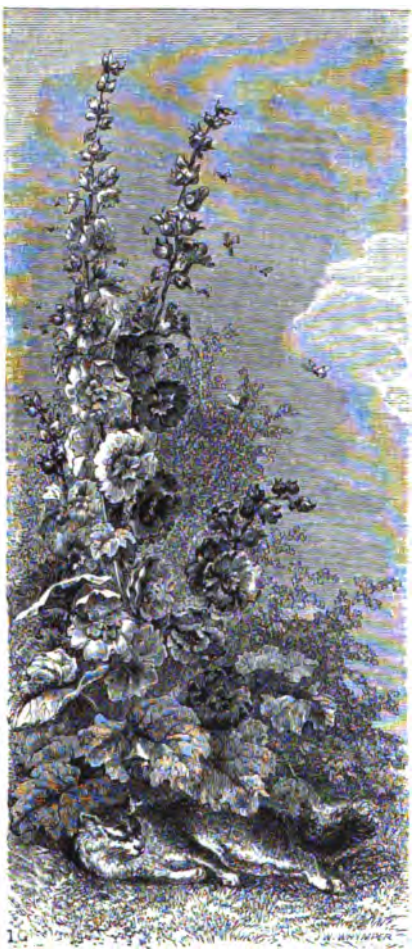
Even the kings in their royal gardens were desirous of nothing more. Not an inch of ground was wasted on an empty effect of grandeur. No trees everywhere displayed their barren majesty. There were few broad alleys, but, on the contrary, a maze of narrow paths wound here and there among the orchard-growth. Flowers—everywhere flowers! In that land of light they seem a coruscation, and it is with them that nowadays we have awakened a glow of warmth in our pale West. In the few openings of our mighty forests, what have *we?* The French vervain,* whose sombre leafage is scantily brightened by a single and almost imperceptible flower.

From Persia we have derived all the adornment and wealth of Spring. It seems as if its sunshine were not so much warm and genial, as fresh and youthful; it is, so to speak, a ray of dawn. Tulips, anemones, jonquils, and all the variety of ranunculi, were its gifts;

> The busy bees with a soft murmuring strain
> Invite to gentle sleep the labouring swain.....
> Stock-doves and turtles tell their amorous pain,
> And, from the lofty elms, of love complain."—*Dryden.*]

* [A species of the natural order *Verbenaceæ*, not to be confounded with the *Verbena officinalis* of our English garden-borders.]

ay, and those violets, lilies of the valley, pinks, and narcissi which seem so thoroughly our own. The delicate lilac, the peach with its shower of virgin snow, and finally, supreme above all, the rose in its close sympathy with the bulbul,—song mingled with sweet odours. All this, too, for the first innocent hour of the young year! Later on, with the languishments of summer, the daughters of India come to greet us, and the children of Tropical America.



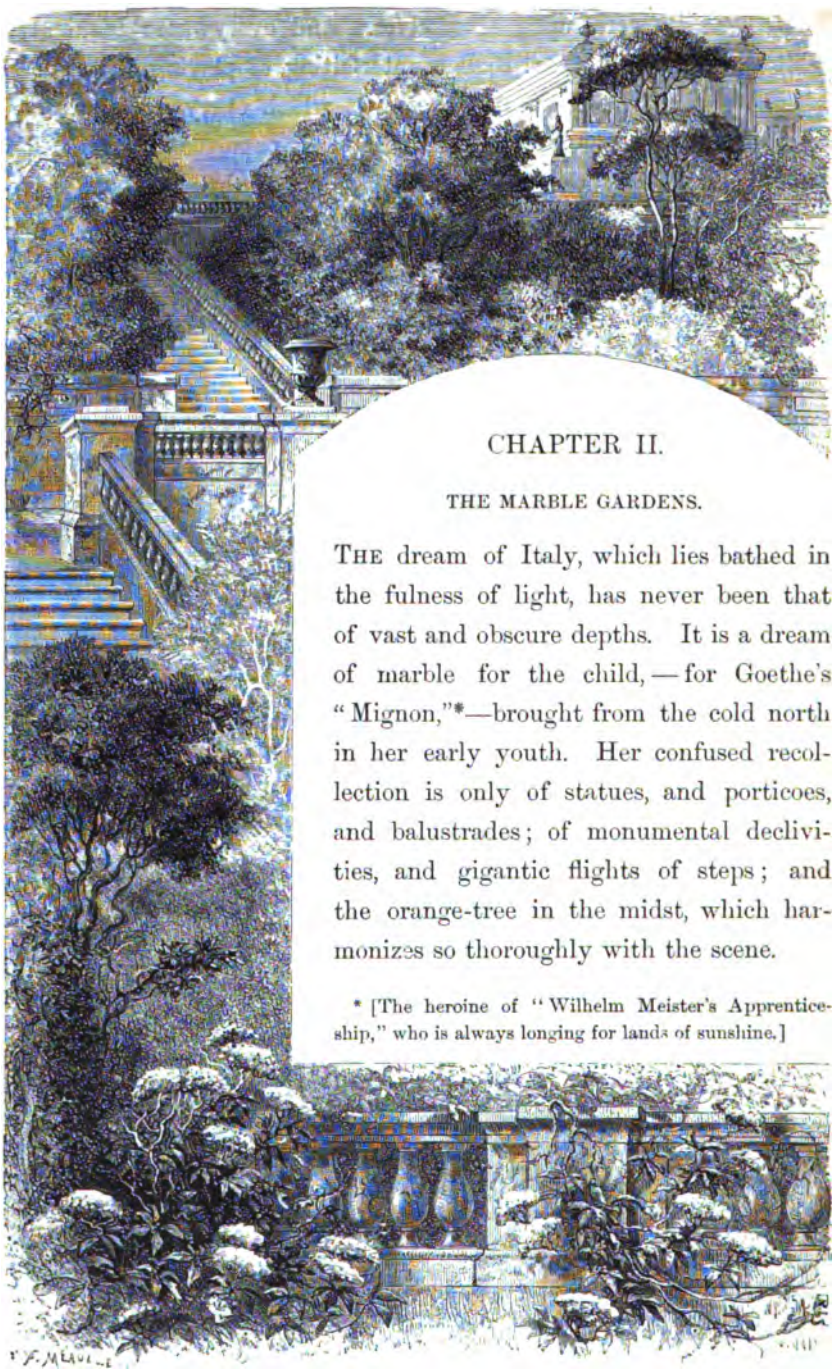
My natal garden and my cradle, like the gardens of Persia, smiled with a pretty and pleasing disorder. I knew nothing as yet of the great symmetrical, uniform parks, which may be described as a vegetable architecture. I saw them first when I was twenty years old, and far away from my France, in serious Germany. Powerful was the impression I experienced when I was led, one afternoon, to the sad and formal Schoenbrün.* It was the month of July; evening came on, and at the end of each deep shadowy avenue sparkled in the gloaming a tiny point of light. Through the effect of other avenues, of a curious winding character, the mazy turns of labyrinths into whose recesses no sunshine ever penetrated involved shade in shade, and

* [The Imperial Palace in the outskirts of Vienna, the summer residence of the Emperor of Austria. It was here that the unfortunate son of Napoleon I., the young Duc de Reichstadt, died on the 22nd of July 1832.]

rotated, as it were, upon themselves. And everywhere I saw the white shadows of statues: some counterfeiting, or playing, the comedy of life; others held captive in the yews which every day more and more closely fastened round them. All this populace of marble did but render the solitude more palpable. Little by little the semi-twilight had stolen away, and under the trees night already prevailed. In the broader alleys there strayed at intervals some soft, vague, shifting gleams of a white radiance.

The moon arose; fair, joyous, and living as in my southern sky.

Before the wan face of that strange orb, the great silent garden sank into funereal gloom. We made haste to fly from it, and recover ourselves. My heart, quivering with some undefinable terror, returned to the Paradises of Persia, which were also mine; to the happy rest of the long ago.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE MARBLE GARDENS.

THE dream of Italy, which lies bathed in the fulness of light, has never been that of vast and obscure depths. It is a dream of marble for the child, — for Goethe's "Mignon,"*—brought from the cold north in her early youth. Her confused recollection is only of statues, and porticoes, and balustrades; of monumental declivities, and gigantic flights of steps; and the orange-tree in the midst, which harmonizes so thoroughly with the scene.

* [The heroine of "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship," who is always longing for lands of sunshine.]

Who would believe that this Italy of the West and of the Apennines, under the glorious lustre in which it rejoices, should be so poor of vegetation? There is nothing to recall the landscapes of Virgil's "Bucolics,"—their simple rustic graces, the fresh bloom of Lombardy, and the soft sweet horizons where hovers the swan of Mantua.

Except the vine and its vermeil clusters, the orange and the golden citron, there are few or no fruits. No dialogue is carried on with the earth, but with yonder profound and azure heaven, which outlines so sharply the fine ridges, enlarges the colonnades, and envelops in soft pure air the golden dust which crowns the monuments with their aureoles.

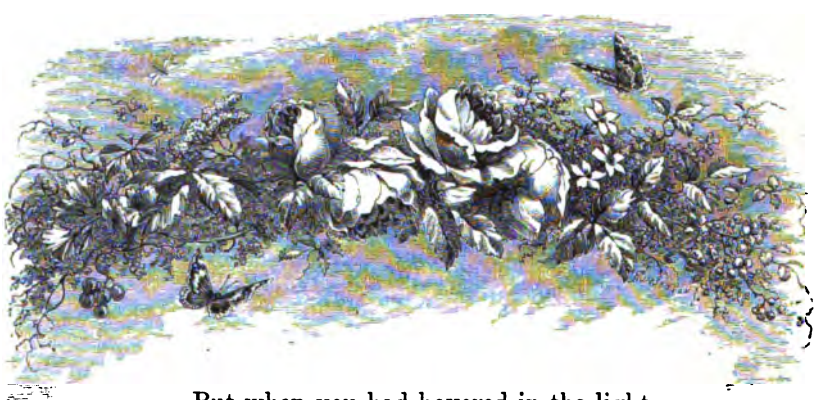
And even the plants, in their rigidity, seem also to have cherished this dream of marble. The box, tall, strong, dry, and austere,—the laurel, with its glittering and somewhat metallic foliage, have built up solid hedges. The gloomy cypress has sprung upwards like an arrow; the pine has converted its graceful crest into a cupola; the plane and the green oak broaden into immense domes.

Thus the trees harmonize with the architecture, and are dependent upon it. Art dominates over Nature, which appears nothing more than Art's accessory.

The central chain, the backbone of Italy, forms an orderly and systematized scene, whose natural terraces were peculiarly appropriate to the reception of magnificent gardens. The successive stages of the hills of Rome were in themselves one moiety of the masterwork, and the travertine, which everywhere abounds, offered its superb and durable materials. And as soon as it rose above the ground it seemed to have undergone the baptism of light, to retain some part of the golden splendour of its rays. Thence came those ruddy tones of the balustrades and porticoes, which accord so admirably with the glowing heat of the eventide horizons. For localities where water is wanting, as in certain villas of Genoa the thirsty, life and movement are due to the white marbles. They are cascades, they form torrents of staircases, whitely-gleaming sheets of stone.

In luminous moonlit nights, the illusion grows very powerful; you think that the running waters are sparkling before you; and you hesitate to descend and trust yourself to the unknown river.

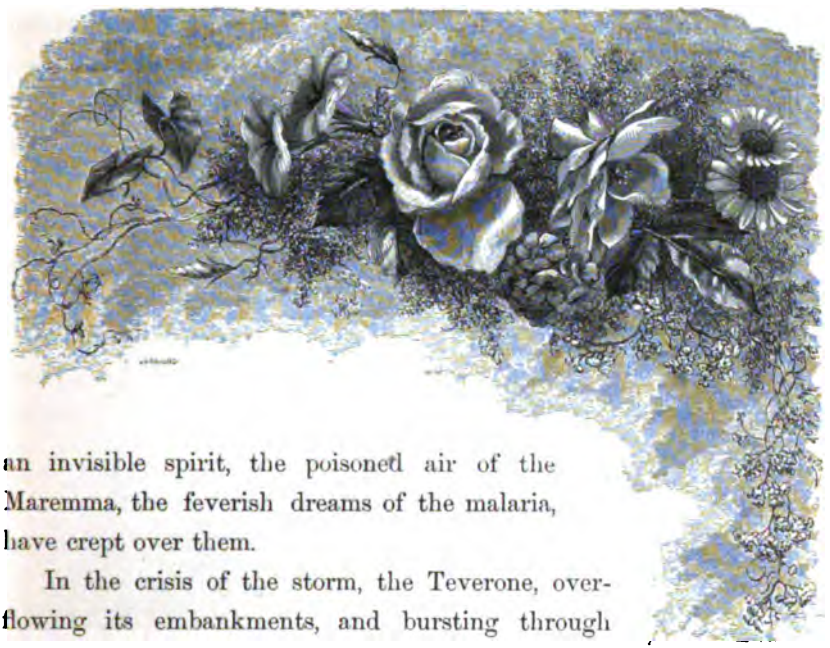
Fortune favoured Rome. So rich in fountains and imposing aqueducts, she drew from the hills which surround her a river of waters to supply her villas. The Teverone, on its way to the Tiber, watered Tivoli abundantly. The Villa d'Este swarmed with fountains. In jets or in cascades, they murmured, they muttered, they overflowed, and went to sleep lower down in noble basins of marble. The contrast was very strong with the immovable vegetation around them; immovable, and frequently gloomy, from its want of revivifying power.



But when you had hovered in the light,

the cold shadows of the yew and the cypress were not unpleasing. From on high the view is impressive and tragical. The tawny Roman Campagna is spread before you, with its shattered aqueducts, its ruins, and its tombs,—no other sign of life than a gloomy shepherd,—the wild black buffaloes emerging from the tall reeds and grasses, seem the wandering shadows of the old Italian gods, the guardian genii of the country. Sometimes, however, you prefer to extend your gaze towards the Sabian Hills, and the distant Abruzzi.

The waters have ceased to flow; human lives have become extinct. Silence wanders everywhere about these marble palaces, and in the hanging gardens created for repose and contemplation. Slowly, like



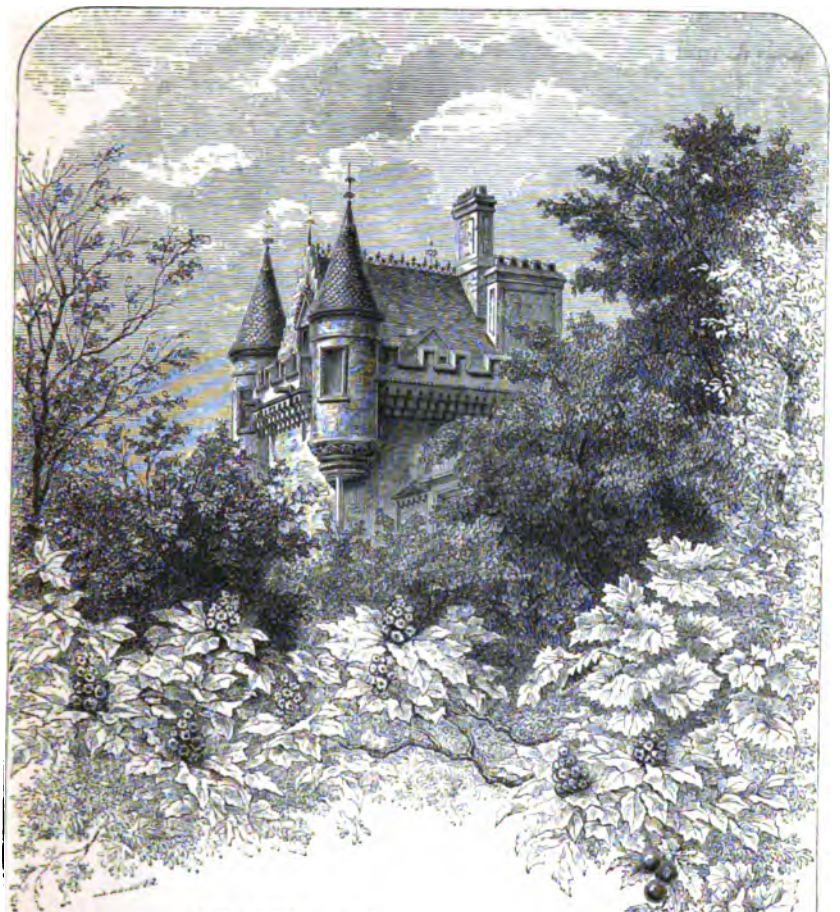
an invisible spirit, the poisoned air of the Maremma, the feverish dreams of the malaria, have crept over them.

In the crisis of the storm, the Teverone, overflowing its embankments, and bursting through its sluice-gates, heavy with mud from the higher grounds, has converted the beautiful gardens into pestiferous, damp, and doubtful spots, protected, supported, and cherished by the mighty trees which, in such localities, imbibe life in death. As you pass beneath their shade, strange gleams play about you, and your face assumes a fantastic and greenish pallor. Can it be that you are still alive?

You should see these abandoned villas, when, over the Roman Campagna, the sky spreads a dull gray veil, and the dreary marshes exhale a warm damp air, which covers the stones of each ancient monument with bead-drops of sweat. Nature, in losing the sun, has lost her smile; has hushed herself into silence; but not with that passionate expectancy she displays in the hour of the storm.

It seems that, like the heart of man, Nature experiences the evil of fits of profound lassitude, when all will is annihilated. Let us mount, nevertheless; let us endeavour to reach the heights. Tivoli, the Villa d'Este, and many others, entice us thither by the attraction of their solitude.

But do not look out afar; while you are resting upon the marble balustrades to-day, do not look towards the luminous horizon. Above all, do not seat yourself, or you will fall a victim to langour and sleep.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE ENGLISH GARDEN.

WHILE the Italy of the Renaissance, drawing its inspiration from antiquity, from the Roman art, possessed the beauty of grand lines corresponding to the breadth of its serene horizons; England, under its misty sky, took the variableness of its climate for a guide, and discovered the undulating lines of the English Garden.

Pope, bred up under the old trees of

Windsor, and in the fantastic shade which Shakspeare has celebrated, conceived and created the New Garden, at Twickenham.

Pope was a counterfeit Æsop, sickly, and isolated from his fellows by his mordant wit, by his very genius, and the envy of his glory. His friend and only love was his mother. He lost her when he was thirty years old. He purchased this property at Twickenham in order to consecrate it to her; to make it at once a monument of affection and the asylum of his loneliness. All Europe at that time was imitating Versailles, its straight alleys, and its open parterres,—flooded with light, and cruelly sad to the wounded heart in search of mystery and shade.

Pope had no counsellor but himself.* He had no patron but the public, who, just at that moment, were purchasing his "Homer," and paying for his Twickenham estate. He created it for his own behoof, and in accordance with his heart and his sorrow.

And, first, the long cypress avenue which led to his mother's tomb; the melancholy of their black shadows added to the shadow of the

* [Pope's idea of what a garden *should* be is expressed in the well-known lines beginning:—

"Consult the genius of the place in all;
That tells the waters or to rise or fall;
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heavens to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;
Calls in the country, catches op'ning glades;
Joins circling woods, and varies shades from shades;
Now breaks, or now directs, the intending lines,
Paints as you plant, and as you work, designs."

*Moral Essays*, lines 57–64.

tomb. This, however, proved to be too gloomy. And, at whatever cost, he longed to bring from the East the living symbol of a gentler sorrow,—the weeping willow, the tree which, ever since the Psalms of the Jewish Captivity, seems to associate itself, to take part in our human agonies.

This was difficult; for the willows invariably died upon the voyage. At last, a solitary tree survived, and became the father, the ancestor of all our Western willows.

The poet also had his part in the garden. Regular and symmetrical in his verses, but fantastic in his glades and avenues, he poured out in the latter his unshackled muse. Their curves and windings cherished its caprices, and suggested ideas or impromptu couplets.

The master himself has said: "I find at the corner of a wood the word which had escaped me."

The English have always loved Nature and solitude. The true Anglo-Saxon manor-house; the feudal castle; the gloomy Puritan mansion; sat down voluntarily near gloomy waters, often of a leaden gray, with scarcely any current, under vast shades,—shadows accumulating upon shadows,—dense roofs ever growing denser. Their masters loved to hear through a thick fog this vegetable sea, and the rustling of the old patrician trees which had been witnesses of so many changes.

High and gloomy walls surrounded the whole scene, and increased the sense of suffocation. This was necessary for security. On the other hand, nothing in the world would have induced the owner to touch with the axe those venerable trees, those august patriarchs.

When the wolves disappeared from the land, and the human wolves were driven from their black retreats, the walls were no longer so needful, and fell into neglect. Bridgeman, an artist of bold inventiveness, achieved a true master-stroke: first he opened a breach in this

wall, which was ready to tumble down; then he swept it away, and supplied its place by a moat.

Great was the astonishment when, from the depth of the gloomy demesne, one saw the meadow, and the wood, and the long perspective, and the various lines of distant horizons in which the eye was lost as in an infinity. England thought it had escaped from its fogs.

This revolution made necessary another; but one more difficult to achieve, and, therefore, a long time delayed.

How was it possible to persuade the English, when at Warwick Castle, and throughout all England, the culture of trees was carried to such a height that in their old age and infirmities they were supported with bands of iron,—how was it possible to persuade them to cut down their saplings, to open up the dense and lofty woods, and thin the thick coppice? The first thing needful was to enfranchise the tree.

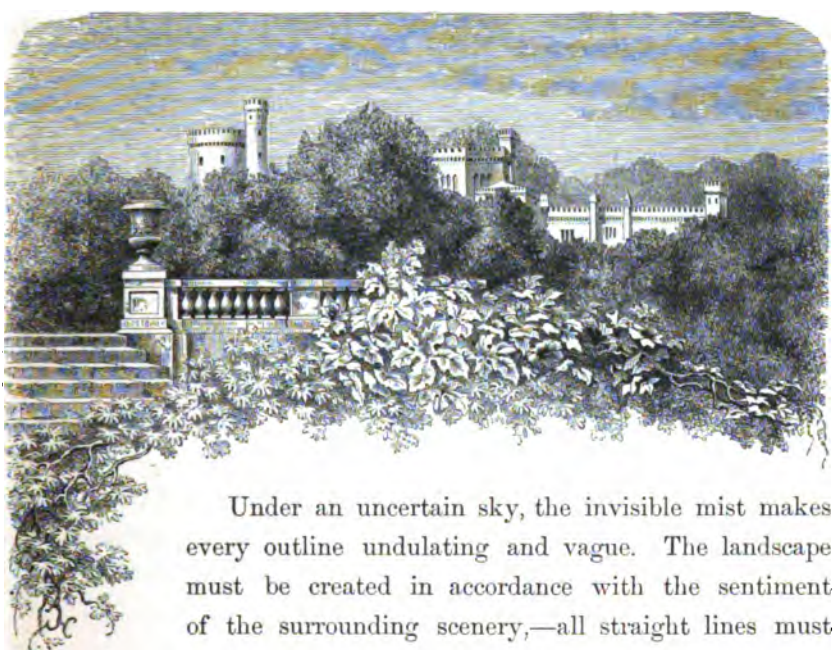
The public taste would no longer endure its ancient caricatures of gardens; those yews fantastically cut, where captive Nature, deformed and tortured, underwent punishment in order to mimic the animal kingdom,—to become an elephant, a bear, a tiger,—and, as was seen in the reign of Queen Anne, to appear sometimes as a fawn, or as a maid of honour! The trees, it is true, avenged themselves, and were they ever so short a time forgotten, thrust forward their young twigs and sprays, and of those quaint figures maliciously made monsters.

But as soon as they were left to spread their branches uncontrolled, it was very evident that they required a wider space, and that around the mighty oaks all inferior existences must be suppressed. Each of these oaks claimed for himself an entire meadow; and thus the religion of the trees was conquered.

Kent, the plain, honest workman, whom his patrons elevated into a painter, and sent to Rome, possessed a remarkably sympathetic understanding of landscape. He seized it in its reality, in its boundless meadows and melancholy heaths, and close to the manorial mansion he brought the farm, the cattle, and all the details of rural life. These

moving pictures diversified the general monotony of a soil too little varied, and a sky too often gray.

The true beauty of these free open gardens, which were really identical with Nature herself, was specially to be found in the charm of their running waters, the freshness of their sward, and the happy grouping of their woods. The house was concealed behind a leafy screen, and showed no anxiety to display itself.



Under an uncertain sky, the invisible mist makes every outline undulating and vague. The landscape must be created in accordance with the sentiment of the surrounding scenery,—all straight lines must be swept away,—and in the shadowy groves vistas opened up towards the light. For when the light is no longer excessive—when, on the contrary, it is too frequently hidden—we are justified in admitting it into the broad open spaces, and, by undulating curves, in giving full play to its rays in all their sweet variety.

Such is the English garden, in its gaiety so young and changeful, and, through its lightly floating mists, so full of fanciful surprises.

In France, where the climate differed, or else another mental condition prevailed, we began at a tolerably late period to imitate these

gardens. And we made them a caprice and a plaything. Under the influence of Rousseau, who was very imperfectly comprehended, the famous phrase, "Let us return to Nature," frequently received a puerile application. Everybody has seen Trianon—that pretty gew-gaw!—crowded with Florian's shepherds, and temples to Love and Friendship.

But Morfontaine,* with its extensive open spaces, its groves, its waters, and its heaths, is, like Blenheim in England, the type of the *true* English garden, in which all the grandeur of Nature has been preserved.

The animals think it a veritable wilderness, and voluntarily people its solitudes. There the deer are at home; clouds of aquatic birds hover above the lakes, and the pining heron thinks she will find once more her favourite swamp.

The true country of the landscape-garden is Scotland—lakes, waterfalls, torrents, grand yet gloomy mountains, and solitary wastes, are already prepared. The sky of England, but with a melancholy more

* [The celebrated garden of Morfontaine was laid out by M. de Morfontaine, about 1770, in direct imitation of Kent's artificial landscapes.—Trianon is a kind of Kew or Stowe, on a small scale. It was much affected by the unfortunate Marie-Antoinette. A beautiful *Jardin des Fleurs* was created here in 1850.]

profound, invests it with a wilder physiognomy. Here human Art has neither place nor portion.

The only great artist is Nature.

PASTORAL SCENERY

## CHAPTER I.

### THE MEADOW—INTRODUCTORY.

WHY did Humboldt, in the midst of Tropical splendours, regret so keenly the lowly German meadow, and while at a distance from it feel that his heart grew older? Because, under the glowing Tropical sky, he was fain to confine his glances to the earth; and this earth, scorched and calcined by the sun, was nothing better than a sandy waste. To believe in the youthfulness of Nature, we must look above, and sustain the full glory of the blinding light in

which the magnificent blossoms of the South admire their own beauty.

Then the remembrance of the fresh green turf of the German land came back upon the traveller's mind with irresistible force. For the smallest flower of our meadows he would have given all the magical wealth of the forests of Guiana.

And it is so with all of us; we love the meadow; it teaches us to believe in eternal youth, or, at least, through its ever-verdant turf, it gives a promise to the soul, and tells it that we cannot die.

It is now many years since my father, when with swollen heart I was removed from my nurse's arms, endeavoured to distract my thoughts by carrying me to see the paternal mansion, so beautiful compared with the modest home I had just left. He took me in his arms, and lifted me up before the family portraits, which all looked down upon me with a serious air; especially my grandfather, the judge, who seemed to condemn my childish chagrin. I flung myself away discontentedly, and took refuge in the glimpse of the garden which the nearest window afforded.

But this was not the garden of my nurse. Hers was rustic and wilder; it was all my own.

In that of my parents there was nothing to awaken emotion. I remained silent in my low chair, and my little head, ripe with the wisdom of four summers, meditated a *coup d'état;* to fly from our mansion, and establish

myself at the farm. And this I accomplished on the following day, when it was supposed that I had already grown accustomed to the house. The distance, to speak the truth, was not very great. I had to cross only the little and the great *chaie*, and then under a pent-house to pass into the pasturage; it was but a step. I soon found myself quite at home, and, as it were, in my nurse's arms. The hay-meadow was some distance off; this one was never mown, but only cropped by cattle—it resembled an English field, with this difference, that the teeth of the cows not biting everywhere, in some

fortunate little spots the plants contrived to grow, and even once in the year to put forth a blossom.

The little farm-wife, Jeanette, was seated on the grass; I thought I caught sight of Suzanne, my foster-sister; I ran to embrace her, and to tell her that I wished to live with her.

That happy day was very brief, for they soon came to fetch me home; but how often I tasted that happiness again, either stealthily, or during long, long hours which I spent, buried in a sea of flowers!

Southern France, however, is not the country of the Meadow, of the emerald green lea, which, from one end of the year to the other, preserves all its freshness. We must progress northwards, and from

Normandy cross the Channel, to land on the English shore. There, there is the true home of the Meadow, and it is not without reluctance that the earth travails with corn. It has yielded only to the solicitation of the warm manure which has made for it a sure *under*ground, since it has not one above.* A shrouded sky, soft mists, a permanent mean of warmth, no excess in winter or in summer—under these conditions flourishes the unfading mead! If it cannot burst into bloom and love *this* year, it will do so *next;* and the little herb is patient.

Trodden under the feet of men and cattle; nibbled, and cropped, and closely shorn, and crushed beneath a heavy roller until it is smooth and soft as velvet, the poor grass has seldom anything more of maternity than the dream. But it has also the *will;* and God, moreover, has taken care of it.

Beneath the mould it is strong, strong in itself and in its association. In its birth it has already been more favoured than other plants, and has seized upon the soil with three tiny roots. So if one should be wounded or should die, the other two will live. Concentrating in

* [Madame Michelet evidently labours under the delusion, so common among foreigners, that we have no sunshine in England.]

themselves all the force which, under suitable circumstances, they would have given to the flower, they move hither and thither, and carry from one place to another the life which the little seed had scattered. This they do to perpetuate their race; but they still retain a thought of self, a dream of being strong while remaining feeble—of becoming undulatory, and, as it were, a moving wave, but a wave which rears itself erect, and does not submit to oppression.

What shall it do in those misty regions where the meadow resembles condensed water,—fluid still, and without any true power of resistance? For it is its desire to become a miniature of the tree; —of this it dreams, and every continuous dream grows nearer to a reality.

Its stem is hollow throughout, and it distributes its points of concentration, its strong tenacious knots—so tenacious, that they are sometimes the stone itself, the dry and vitreous silica. Such a grass as this, at its points of accumulation, will flash into fire under the steel. And while rising to build up at intervals its little fortifications, the silica sheathes and encases the whole stem, giving it a beautiful varnish, impermeable against moisture.

If the misty isles are the Paradise of unfading meads, the mountains of Central and Southern France are their lofty poesy. On the heights, as a provision for the winter; in the warm plains, where the culm would ripen quickly and without profit, all the meadows are mown.

The happy time for the grasses of the southern meadows is in the winter. Not sinking into the ground, but with wise prudence spreading over the surface, they are sensible of the slightest warmth. On genial days, under a veiled sky, which prevents the earth from growing chill, they are hard at work, as we see in the bright greenness which everywhere announces the young life. And on this sward, so incomparably fresh, you may sometimes surprise, even in December, the charming little daisy, the most courageous of our meadow-flowers.

Its double frill of white, streaked with a rosy tint which is both

lively and gentle, enriches the lea with a delicate and touching decoration. No heart, be it sorrowful, young, or old, ever encounters the first-born of the year without feeling itself moved and rejuvenated. It is charming and it is prudent. It comes forth at the first sunbeam, but warns us not to trust to it. At the slightest passing shadow it folds up its leaves, draws in all the petals of its corolla, envelops itself in its calyx, and once more becomes a green herb. At its pleasure the meadow returns to its winter gloom, or assumes its vernal garb; and this as in a dream.

One day in February we were walking at Hyères in a graceful hollow which still preserved some degree of humidity, and came upon a complete swarm of daisies, wide open, and drinking in the sunshine. From their living enamel a faint breath escaped. They were, for us, the first smile of the year. An hour afterwards—it was already evening—and the sun sank, and black clouds, the children of the Mistral, scudded across the sky. We traversed a second time the daisied field. They were no more! The meadow had lost its youth and gaiety. You would have called it a field close-mown, if, on looking nearer, you had not detected at the head of some little drooping stalks an almost imperceptible rosy point, which told you that the daisies were still there.

When the Easter daisies, having finished their destiny, no longer close their corollas, the grasses have already attained a considerable height. On every hand you hear the sharpened scythes. Our meadow is precocious; it ripens quickly. Before me spreads a miniature forest, in which the little children lose themselves up to their shoulders, and find it difficult to walk. They feel, with a thrill of delight passing over their countenances, the soft caress of the lightly-waving herbs. For these are in flower, and their blossoms bend to the wind. They are the children of grace, for whom the winter turf has worked assiduously.

Apparently, at this hour, they have nothing to do but to abandon her. All their golden stamens, waving at the extremity of an invisible silken thread, are so many trembling wings. Under the waves of the breeze, they seem to swim. At evening, in the slanting rays of the

sunset, you cannot tell whether it is the light, or their animated dust, which covers earth with the long golden ray shooting from earth to heaven. Among the most favoured (*stipa*), the long feathery stigmata, lighter than air, pass and re-pass across this cloud, and seem to imbibe from it their life.

To-morrow all will be at an end; you will once more think that the meadow has been changed. Each floating panicle will have lost its winged dream. Already they weigh more heavily, and droop towards the earth. Soon they will be lying there. I hear the sweep of the scythe which cuts them down. All over the country their tiny soul is diffused. Thereafter nothing will be so sweet as *it!* The penetrating aromas soon arise which intoxicate and overshadow the thought.

When the heavy lingering waggons slowly take their way along the rural road, these dead herbs, in the evening moisture, yield, more abundantly even than when alive, the sweetness of their innocent perfumes.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE HERBAGE.

THE subtle and delicate meadow-grasses have thriven on the dew of heaven, on the silvery vapour which floats along the willow-fringed bank of the streamlet, on the soft invisible moisture diffused by the wandering breeze. Their sisters in the rich pastures which the mower so frequently cuts are much drier, and especially much more thirsty. Their habitat is found in dank recesses, in low-lying enclosures which the sun discreetly passes, where the vapours rise very slowly under the great tree which covers them with shade. Light there is, but, as it were, carefully *strained*; a kind of caress, like a gentle excitation.

In the orchard, under the little forest-growth of fruit-trees, under

the floating garlands of the vines, these grasses flourish also in a forest. They mount on high, enlarge their green succulent leaves with the somewhat common savour of the exuberant and immature sap. Even on a summer noon you cannot be certain that they will not retain a little dew. And among them, truly, you come upon the paradise, the delicious freshness of the hot summer-hours, the veritable thicket, where the cows lose themselves, and ruminate their long, long dreams. The

flies follow them; but only the innocent flies, which love shade and not blood. With their wings of gold they hover in the broken rays, they soothe the herd with their vague hum, which grows slow or hasty according to the measure of their flight.

It is not so much a pasture as a shelter. In the hot day the appetite languishes, Nature herself seems to sleep, and the plants lower their heavy heads to contemplate the earth.

How sweet it is to dream among the grasses, and feel the passage only of warm waves of air, while on the plain the sun pours out its glory, and reddens the ripening harvest!

I am thinking here of our southern fields. In the north there is no excess of sunshine, and, even in the heart of summer, the slightest passing shade suffices. And yon tall grasses, springing beneath the lofty trees, do not charm us as in the torrid climates, where the air has more thirst than the earth water. It is there that, with a cry of joy, one discovers the sudden welling-up of a little stream creating around its source a nest of verdure. Livelier still the emotion if it has spread into a basin. The trees about its border have thriven, but they do not grow erect; they bend forwards, with intertwining branches and extending shadows, creating a kind of arch.

A little further, and the earth is scorched. On the margin of the stream which, by to-morrow, perhaps, will be dried up in spite of the

leafy shade, a complete world of plants has struggled into life. The grasses grow on the bank that they may rise one above another, and clinging to the boughs of the trees, look down from thence on this fugitive water, their dream and their life.

What happiness it would be to possess it; to enjoy it all to one's-self in some sheltered hollow; to nourish it with great storms of rain; to make for it, not a girdle of walls, but a threefold belt of trees which love the water, and repeat its echoes! These trees are born of it; soon would they shelter it, and invest it with a charming mystery. A little sombre pool at the bottom of a radiant garden; —such is the universal dream under the oppression of the intense light of the South. There grow the murmurous reeds,—the grasses which float above the rigid rushes, and upon the pliant osier,—and so skilfully have they united the earth to the water that you cannot determine the boundary of either. You do not plant your foot without a little apprehension. But the attraction is powerful; and especially on the evening of a very hot day. The golden wave which trembled in the sunset has now grown pale, and the vapours begin to rise. In the lower ground the breeze is not yet astir, but on high the tall poplars have already felt it. Soft and gentle, it descends; so soft and gentle that it scarcely stirs the mobile tops of the weeping willows.

Ah, those blessed evening hours we shall never again recover, nor that unconscious childish soul; unconscious, and yet already so full of emotion, so sensible of the lightest touch! How many things have swept over our early impressions, which ought to have effaced them, and yet they have proved the strongest! In sleep, especially, that dream of the slumbering waters comes back to us once more, and we are young again. The sky is mute and veiled, as before a storm. The lake seems hushed. I hover above it slowly. Upon the heavy air I lean heavily and wearily. I almost touch the water with my feet. Uplifted by the silvery vapour, and swaying with it from bank to bank, I feel no longer the harsh realities of earth. Oh, memories of sweet sad nights, which survive the hour of wakening, and clothe it with a shadow of the winged life!

This magic of a little water mirroring the heaven on earth, other and less thirsty countries possess, perhaps, in an excessive abundance. The water there is seldom concentrated in little basins; it flows or sleeps in ample veins, in canals which furrow in every direction the meadows, and which, compressed within their banks, filtrate and expand underneath the ground. The turf thenceforward is transformed. It is no longer composed of a fine smooth grass; but too frequently becomes the coarse, marshy, meadow-herbage, rough, poor, and odious to the herd. Milder in other localities, it swells and expands, and grows rich with stem and leaves. Feeling the water, its nurse, above as well as below, it has mounted towards the light. Undoubtedly it wishes that the latter may relieve it of a little of the over-rich element in which it sinks submerged.

Such are the meadows of Holland, with their brimming canals, which cross the road so peaceably, now by my side, now over my head, and not infrequently on a level with my eyes. Nothing stirs, and yet the unequal vapours communicate to this immobility an ever-changing undulatory grace, and an illusion of motion.

The lord of the solitude is not man, but the bird which passes and re-passes you, and is always there at work. It is the wise stork, which on one foot muses and meditates; or the great melancholy ox, when, lingering behind the barrier, he loudly demands to be admitted to his stall.

Holland is no morning landscape. On its low-lying levels a dull veil rests; the grass reeks with vapour; the feeble sunshine is willing but unable to absorb or lighten it. The day is wan and gentle. But the summer evening, two or three hours before sunset, has an unique attraction for the soul. The long silvery ribbons of the canals, the mirrors of the lakes, the magic of the floating meadows, the splendour of the rays which start through the gathering mists,—these form a marvellous and entrancing dream. Sweeter still the reality,—the friendly cow, which yields the bounty of her milk at the touch of the milkmaid's hand, and casts all around her dreamy eyes.

## CHAPTER III.

### NEAR THE FARM.

A COUNTRY-HOUSE is lifeless without a farm; for it is the farm which follows and expresses the movement of the year. It is true this annual cycle is but feebly felt in the great farms of Northern France, which are dedicated to the breeding of cattle or the production of beet-root. It is the little farm of the South, which, in the regular succession of its occupations, best realizes the rhythm and the clock of Time; not by the seasons, but by the month and by the day, we may almost say by the hour. The ground is there divided: the demesne is narrow. But every

little proprietor wishes to effect much, and to produce a miniature world. This is the pride of the very poorest. And when showing you his farm, he says, "There is a little of everything."

We shall soon go into the field. But first let us survey the objects which lie near the farm: the little cultivated plots, and the long green ribbons which descend from the neighbouring hill-side, mingling

together their sweet clear tints, or somewhat darker colours. Here are the hay-fields, and their carpet of flowers,—the trefoil in rosy balls, the beautiful deep red or carnation spikes of the sainfoin, and the violet clusters of the lucerne, so justly named, in allusion to its prodigious fecundity, the "wonder of the household." In France it yields three times the return of grain, and its excess nourishes the famished cattle of Provence.

These artificial meadows create throughout the year the illusion of a benignant spring.

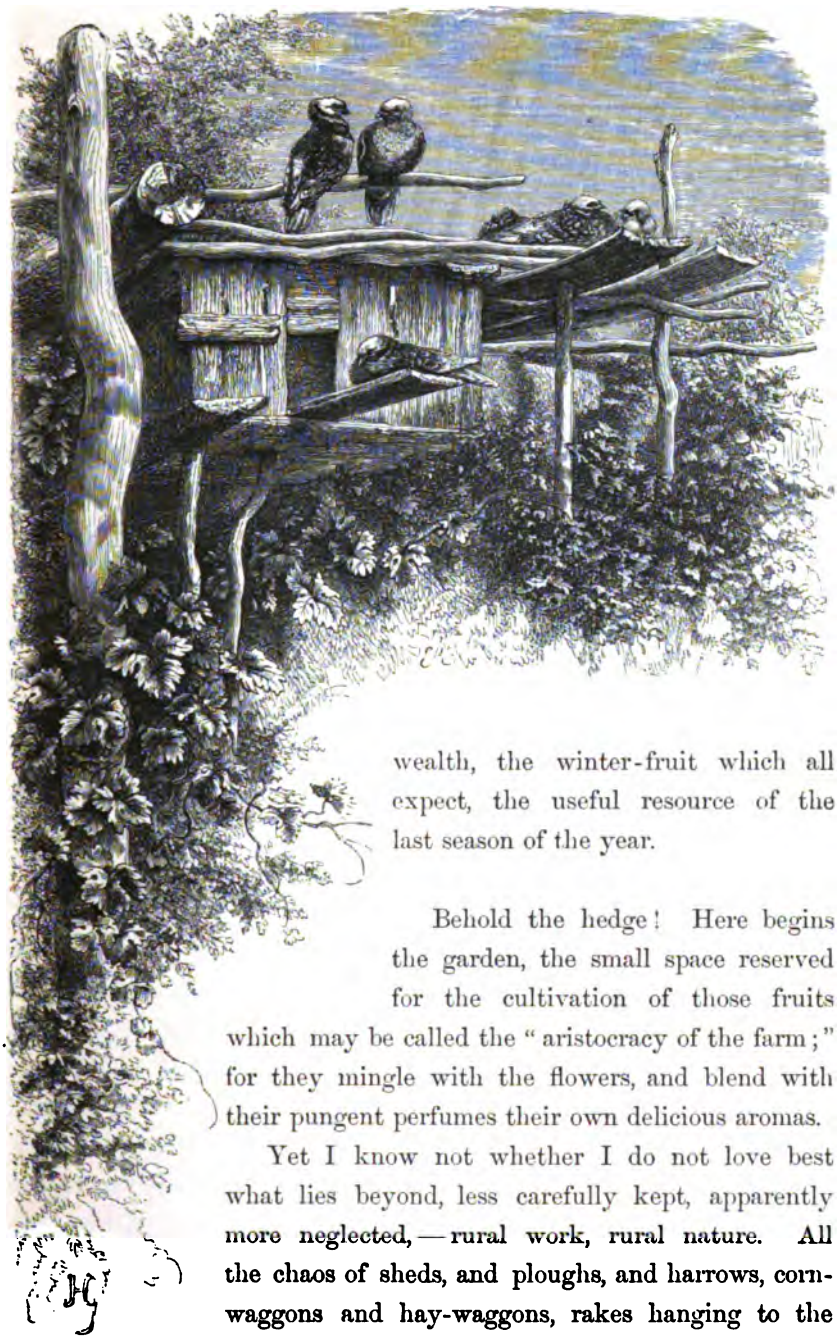
Above the low fodder-crops rises more boldly the merry maize, erecting its firm, well-articulated stem, to isolate on high its rich panicle, bending beneath the breeze. He is the husband, and somewhat haughty; lower down, his spouses, veiled and shrouded like Oriental women, gently wave their long silken locks, of a light and tender green.

The head-gear of the hemp-plant is sometimes gray, and sometimes

of a deep green, according as it is wafted to and fro by the wind, which scatters abroad its narcotic odours. We shall do well to keep away, and turn our glances rather towards yonder little field, all enamelled with innocent blue flowers, which quickly disappear. They are the blossoms of the flax, to which we owe our diaphanous tissues, and the delicate lace with its dull dead whiteness,—the noble and affecting ornament of the woman who has suffered and grown pale.

Among all these varied crops, diverge in different directions long lines of cherry-trees, plum-trees, and peach-trees, in the face of the wind. About them mount and twist and clamber the mad dishevelled vines. While their grave and prolific sisters of the hills wreathe quite close to the stony soil their sombre hieroglyphics in order to drink the life-essence from the scintillating flint, the vines of the low rich grounds feed at will, and elongate the clasping tendrils and lianas, which they throw forth and knot together utterly heedless of the fruit, and thinking only of festoons and arabesques.

On the other side spreads the gloomy foliage of the solanaceæ (the potatoes), which have no other flowers to show than a few of a pale weak gray. But what matters the glitter? Beneath lies the true



wealth, the winter-fruit which all expect, the useful resource of the last season of the year.

Behold the hedge! Here begins the garden, the small space reserved for the cultivation of those fruits which may be called the "aristocracy of the farm;" for they mingle with the flowers, and blend with their pungent perfumes their own delicious aromas.

Yet I know not whether I do not love best what lies beyond, less carefully kept, apparently more neglected, — rural work, rural nature. All the chaos of sheds, and ploughs, and harrows, corn-waggons and hay-waggons, rakes hanging to the roof, scythes prudently suspended from the walls,

light reaping-hooks fit for a woman's hand, and flails, which ere long will fall back in harmonious cadence on the bearded corn.

And how many other living and speaking things there are! On the ground a populace of fowls, hens, turkeys, pintados, beautiful and noble geese swimming in the fish-ponds. Above, the pigeon-house always full of nests, the prolonged and softened cooing of the doves, mingling with the noisy chirping of the sparrows. On the garden-balustrade the peacocks display their majesty, now expanding and now folding up their splendid fans. And at evening their most melancholy and monotonous cry is repeated by the distant echoes.

It has been the good fortune of our farm to find within its reach a sturdy little brook, and to make use of it in grinding the corn. Formerly it profited by the good-will of the breeze, which on yonder hill-top drove round the huge wings both day and night with a slow but irresistible motion. At evening the moving shadows seemed so many

signals. The wholesome breath of the corn filled our mind with visions of the rising dough, and of the heated oven, in whose capacious jaws quick waves of fire were roaring. In anticipation we smelt the new-baked bread, whose odour is healthier and more appetizing than that of cake.

To this bread with which the mother nourishes her children, let us add the easier harvest which God provides for them in the pleasant hedges that surround each field and enclosure. In the spring, they belonged to the bird, who built her nest among the hawthorn. Towards the close of summer it is the turn of the children to seek there the last mulberries, medlars, and hazel-nuts. No happiness can surpass this unexpected harvesting! To-morrow, perhaps, they will have forgotten it; but to-day, in the hour of plunder, how each little heart beats beneath the thorns, and how the eyes shine at each capture of the wild-fruit—bitter as it is to the taste, but so good to hold!—so good to show to the inquiring eager glance which says, "Where didst thou find it?"

But of these berries, this small fruit of the hedgerow, which the children despoil, the legitimate owner is the bird. He is the life, the voice, the spirit of the farm, and without him it is dull and dumb.

Let but the peasant—and the task is not a hard one—leave him in peace under his leafy shelter, and he will be well repaid! The bird is always willing to work; and there is enough for him to do in the thatched roofs and around the farm. He never ceases from coming and going, from fluttering to and fro. He is fain to see and inspect everything. And as his wage he asks, in the winter only,

a little secret corner, and a handful of hay in the barn, where he may listen to the winds, and breathe through the vent-holes of the stable the sweet warmth of the cows.

How often have we children, frozen with our escapades among the snow, disturbed the quiet of the little troglodytes in their retreats among the thatch! Nor was it without a beating of the heart that I saw them disappear through some imperceptible crevice.

Only in the silence and the solitude can one estimate the value of those numerous voices which call and seek and cross one another, blend in so sweet an accord, and as much as, or even more than, the Light, breathe a new soul into Nature. They are the friends whom we expect in the spring, and whom we see depart with regret in the melancholy days of autumn.

Let but a bird—that being so free and uncontrolled, which with one stroke of the wing puts space between you and himself—let him but be willing to draw near and conclude a friendship with you, and lo, how your heart is moved! No one can be insensible to the claim which confidence imposes; it is, so to speak, a freeman's right. The stork of the North builds his nest on your roof, and everybody envies you, and seeks the same favour in the coming spring. The swallow of the South makes our open house her own, and joy enters with her; her presence is a promise of happiness.

Still further southward, that magnificent artist, the nightingale, places her nest without fear within reach of your very hand; I saw it at Hyères in the folded leaf of a palm-tree. You brushed it as you went by. The female, when sitting on her eggs, looked at you with her fine large eyes, mild, and yet a little fierce. Your heart lays claim to no privilege but to watch her, and thenceforth is fixed upon that nest, and guards it as tenderly as the bird herself.

But when the north wind comes, these singers leave us, and we shall be without friends.

Nay, yonder, from the chill shadow of the firs, emerges the little magician who has no dread of winter, for his soul is all aflame. He perches on the threshold, on the window-sill; he goes in search of you, and follows you everywhere; salutes you with the last note of evening, and the first chirrup of the morn. His black eyes, like his voice, are a spark; and he darts them at you with a charming audacity. As your equal and your comrade, he seeks your society. As he was my companion in infancy, so has he been throughout life, and I have named him—Robin Redbreast!

At least, if he does not ask your help, in a time of heavy snow or bitter frost, you may do like the peasant,—you may leave him where God has placed him; never attempt to hold him captive. He would suffer too keenly; imprisonment would slay him.

Many persons are familiar with the little Robin, which in the winter of 1856 sang to us, in a low voice, the song I have attempted to write down.* We had purchased him about the close of autumn. It was by his own desire; inviting us, and watching us with a human eye from the depth of his narrow prison.

Here, at least—in our house, I mean—he enjoyed sufficient space, and a view of the Luxembourg, which he inspected from the window, planted firmly on his little feet, and chirruping with an angry accent. Just as quickly he would place himself on his master's head, or his papers, or even on his pen. He would look at him curiously and interrogatively, feeling, as children do, a strong desire to interrupt his work, and engage his attention. The master would gently wave him aside; but no, stretching apart his little legs, he kept his place on the slippery leaf, and would fly away only at his own pleasure.

We had become his slaves: we durst not open the windows, and for his sake we deprived ourselves of air. He was not contented with a single room; he took possession of the whole house. But his favourite resort was the wood-shed: it reminded him of his native forest, and of that which preserved for him (unfortunately, I did not know it then!) under the bark the food which fed his flame.

When summer came, and we were called upon to decide whether we would shut him up in a cage or clip his wings, that we might throw open our windows and breathe, I chose the latter, with that emotional rapidity which mistrusts reflection. Apparently it was nothing—a mere tip of the wing. But escaping from my hand, and shuddering, he concealed himself in the shade: longing for, yet unable to recover, that which in captivity had suggested at least the *sense* of freedom, he recoiled, he concealed himself, He refused to emerge from his night. I saw him looking at me with his mild human eyes, full of a sombre grief. At intervals he fluttered his mutilated wings, as if to show me

* [See "The Bird," edition 1870, p. 242.]

what I had thenceforth made of him; a creature of earth, unable to detach himself from it, and clinging to it so strongly that he was fain to return to its bosom.

I felt my heart sink: I knew I was a criminal. When I came back I found him still buried in his gloom. Then I took him to my breast, and with tears I spoke to him as if he could understand me. He looked at me with that melancholy gaze which seemed to say, "What hast thou done?" I bestowed upon him all the tender cares I could think of; I fed him with warm food to restore to him his lost wings and power of flight. It was in vain. For this was not his moulting-time. In the forest he would then have been absorbed in loving: it was his happy moment of rich development. The dream was in his soul, and he suffered all the more in being dead to the wingèd life.

My punishment was to see him fade away in a lingering agony while his spirit was full of vitality, and at the last hour seeking a refuge in the bosom of her who had wounded him.

It is twelve years since this occurred, and the tears flow down my cheeks as I write these lines. I fancy I am still holding him in my hand—that I see his humid eye closing as if in forgiveness. Ah me! I shall never be consoled for his loss!

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CORN-FIELD.

If the delicate meadow-grasses love to climb the mountain-heights,—to clothe and embellish those great vertebræ of the earth which without them would lift up a bald head to heaven,—the cereals, those friends of man, prefer the plain, where they may extend at will the dense, forest-like grove of their ripened ears.

Feeling all the gravity of their mission, they form with one another an intimate bond of union. You will not find them isolated anywhere: they are a family, and in certain countries spread over a wide extent, which the eye is unable to measure.

The meadow still loves to plant itself in the natural basins left by fresh-water lakes; the cereals willingly take possession of the dried-up ocean-beds of old. The rains have washed away the brine, but left the element which makes the strength and soul of the culm,—silica, mingled with prolific limestone. *There* is their kingdom,

and they are fain to occupy it alone. In France they reign only in the Beauce. In Languedoc they cover an area of fifty leagues in length, stretching to the very foot of the Pyrenees. If we remember that the ever-green leas are pent up to the north in Normandy and to the east in Alsace, we may say that the cereals reign in France. The meadows are the vesture of Great Britain.*

Yes! in France the emerald land is changed into a land of gold. But the boundless corn-fields are always somewhat monotonous, though they have a peculiar charm in the softness of their horizons.

It is not "the region of fear," as in the infinity of the elevated herbaceous plains—the savannah of America or the steppe of Asia. All here is human. Even in the season of solitude, when the corn toils on without man's knowing or feeling that the ever-growing and quickly-ripening crop is his own, the earth is never bare, is never a desert.

Those who have grown acquainted with the lofty mountain, and have spent their life among the sublime horrors which make its eternal drama, invariably preserve a something wild and fixed in their gaze, as if they saw visions. Very different is the long, earnest glance of him who from his youth has seen below him the immense plain and sounded the moving infinite. It enjoys the fancies and images of the full, unbroken day; its sudden flashes, its sparkling noontide glow, its long evening gleams, its shadowless unending twilights. Later in life, and in the gloomy, skyless city, his eyes retain the vision of former years: they are always looking forth

* [Such generalizations are dangerous. The proportion of arable to meadow land is little less in Great Britain than in France, if the larger area of the latter be taken into account.]

into the distance—they seem to penetrate a world beyond the present.

It is the corn-field, mind you, which marks the graduated balance of the seasons, and inspires joy or melancholy, according to the epoch of the year.

In winter it agreeably deceives us; its delicate, luminous greenness, which makes the meadow by its side seem dark and drear, springs towards the sky: we feel that it would fain be heroic. Yet it is moderate in its aspiration, and still clings closely to the earth: nor does it hate the frost, though it represses its impetuousness. When you see it undulating under the passing wind, you know that the stalk has risen, and that the ear is on the point of flowering. It seeks to drink in all the warmth of earth, and all the magnetic radiance of heaven. Nor are the heaven and the earth too much, when over the sea of corn sweeps a sea of love.

Its beauty is to be found in its entirety in its rolling waves, which, as they burn and glow, return to the hot sky of August ardour for ardour. The yellow oats, which are already ripe when the wheat is only flowering, possess a solitary beauty. Theirs is not the erect close ear rising from the extremity of the upright stem. They droop and bend, as if somewhat weary of their burden. Wheat undulates; oats balance. Under the influence of the wind the wheat-field is *one;* it is the rising or sinking wave, which ever moves in accordance with the general swell. There is no undulation in the less compact, less united, but more vaporous oats, with its too pliant sprays. Oppressed by the wind, it flings to and fro its ears, like a sea dashing against

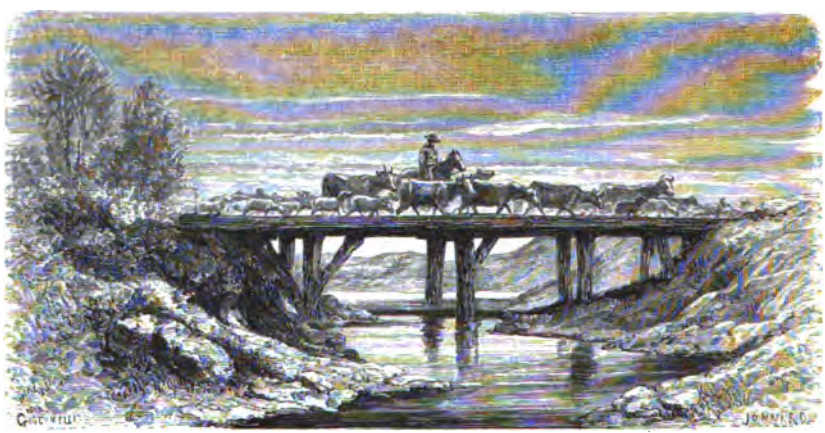
a reef. The struggle is unequal: it yields to the breeze, and is seemingly torn up by the roots, and swept away irresistibly.

But this is not the real, the actual drama. Over our plain, the image of calm uniformity, the storm too often rushes. The corn is ripe, and ready for the sickle. Only one day more! But that day has lost everything. It is in the South especially that this grandly terrible scene is witnessed. At first it is but a cry from the thirsty plain to the great barrier of the Pyrenees, which yonder sit enthroned upon their glaciers. The dialogue is carried on between the plain and the mountain. But in due time the ocean also takes a part. Athwart the southern wind, which reigns and absorbs, and fills the entire space with a burning electricity, in waves but few as yet, strikes a breath from the West. We are warned of its approach by the gyrations of the weather-cock, which grinds abruptly on its pivot. Behind the kindling plain, the cold winds from the table-lands of the Cantal, tempted by the void, are fain to pass. But they must thread the winding defile of the Aveyron, which coils and coils upon itself no fewer than seventeen times. But this spiral evolution, which is at first an obstacle to the winds, afterwards doubles their power.

The vapours have ascended, and are now quite visible. From Bordeaux to Spain a black and uniform pall is stretched over the firmament; but it is motionless. If it would only burst in the distance, and spare the harvest!—It cannot be. Already some lurid jets of smoke shoot out from the leaden curtain. They haste on rapid wings.—Whither? Towards that fierce offspring of the Aveyron, that yawning ravine, which will ingulf the storm, and swell with it its dark-red waters. Soon it is something more than jets: the whole black mass is in motion. Upon earth nothing as yet is stirring, except a few leaves, which flutter about in wild excitement. But terror is everywhere visible. The water-birds dive to the bottom of the rushes; those of the gardens fly from the copses and the hedges which they have loved to the presence of man, and take shelter under his roof.

The palpitations of the lightnings, their ominous gleams under the black cloud, are not the causes of our terror; but that sound

which one hears *beyond* the clouds in an invisible world—a sound as of cars loaded with stones. Hail is forming in the atmosphere. We shall not escape it here. An immense flash has this time rent the heaven in twain, and the storm begins — the wrath of the wind, the rattle of the first hailstones. Man lets his arms fall by his side, and feels himself conquered.—It passes—the waterspout passes. The robust trees follow it with their crests; the pliant



branches fly, or rather stretch out their arms in distress, towards the power which summons them. All things submit, and apparently are lost and swallowed up in the narrow funnel, which is so much stronger than the wide plain.

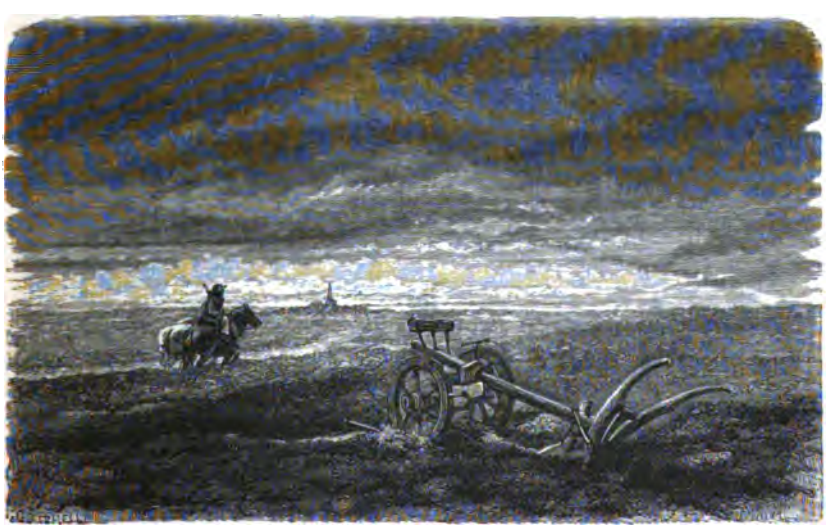
It is over: the storm has gone by. And also hope. Nothing remains standing in this sea of ripe corn. Cold and chill is Nature under those accumulated hailstones which will not melt. She cannot even recover herself. From the warm air of the previous day we feel that we have passed into winter. The sky wears a green pallor; the torn and mutilated trees do not attempt to resuscitate their poor remains of foliage, and it will be long before they flower again. The hard, raw air makes no appeal to life. The communion of Man with Nature is, as it were, broken.

Formerly, in the beneficent electric waves of air, the lark sprung from the furrow, and rose above the storm, to see the further world and hymn the praise of Light. *This* time she does not mount. Is she

still alive ?—At all events, her nest is destroyed, and her hope in herself. All the country-side wears an aspect of grief.

In good time we must labour again on that earth which has yielded us only ruin. The poor, patient labourer, accustomed, as it seems, to these strokes of fate, resumes his toil.

He turns up the furrow, and anew intrusts to it his seed. He knows very clearly, too, that it is not earth which has deceived him. She had been courageous, and had worked in union with him. It was the sky which denied him success. He gazes upon it—upon that firmament now so gentle in the melancholy days of autumn. It is growing late. Night is coming on, and the flock returns from the pastures. But as for him, he still urges on the ploughshare, and labours pensively in the last ray of the evening.



MODERN SCENERY

## CHAPTER I.

### THE SOIL.

If in our desultory journeys we traverse France from south to north, or from east to west, according to the season, the scene changes, and the landscape is no longer the same. It is a privilege of our land, so varied in its modes of culture, never to present the same individuality. Constant in its products, movable in its distribution of crops, one would say it was always something different. It was not yesterday what it is to-day, or what it will be to-morrow; but it does not the less hold us under its charm.

"Qui d'el'e pourrait se lasser?
Toujours sa beauté renouvelle."

"Who of France could ever weary,
With her beauty aye renewing?"

The secret of this power of bringing forth, at its pleasure apparently, the woods, the fields, the meadows, —of assuming alternately a youthful and pleasant gaiety, or a calm and noble gravity,—this secret she

willingly yields up to any one who knows how to examine her rightly.

At the end of autumn, when the crops are garnered, the ploughshare labours deeply, and the earth opens all warm and smoking. The stubble covers her with a pale mantle: under the hoofs of the heavy oxen she unveils herself, and bares her torn flanks.

Accordingly, over all the country, in the melancholy of the feeble winter light, and over the sleeping landscape, extends the austere mosaic of the furrowed fields. The soil has no other decoration than those sober, and sometimes sad, but never commonplace, tints.

Sombre in the valley, and fertile with mould (*humus*); on the hill yonder it lies both pale and poor, in the loose rude moorland. To the eastward of, and at no great distance from, Paris, over a space of forty leagues, extends the uniform white plain of Champagne—a sea of chalk.

More to the eastward, in the direction of Alsace—an impressive contrast—the mountains lift up their full, red masses. A little iron has proved sufficient to colour the sandstone, and invest them with a living aspect. But wholly different is the view if we turn towards the Bresse, the black peat lying thickly on its swamp. In Provence the sun has made the country of a tawny colour. Still keeping to the south, but with a westerly flight, we find it content to be yellow: excellent and free this soil, and of varied elements, forming the great plain of the Garonne.

To him who passes along with an indifferent air, and who has never interrogated Nature, these differences will count for nothing. Whether the soil be red or white, is it not always the same thing?—and a thing which is virtually inert?

But the child with an instinct for Nature feels it all alive and active. Do you see him in his little nook of earth, so grave in the midst of his labour? How he digs, and turns up the mould, and smooths it, and fashions it! What an enthusiasm already! Its beautiful brown colour tells him that *it* also wishes to work. And he believes it, and is sure of it, as he sows the seeds which Nature will teach to germinate.

At a later date he will be smitten with a little climbing plant; but before it makes its appearance he will turn again to the soil, and question it: Will the plant be able to creep through? The days pass, and there is no sign. He waters; he scratches with his little fingers, as if to make a few tiny basins. In reality, it is because he can bear suspense no longer. He must see and surprise the secrets of the Earth.

Much stronger is the confidence of the peasant who has devoted to it his whole heart.

"Let us take a walk on Sunday in the country, and follow him. See! who is it yonder, walking in advance of us? It is two o'clock —his wife is at vespers. He is dressed in his Sunday clothes; and why? I answer, because he goes to see his mistress.

"What mistress?—His land.

"I do not say he goes direct to the fields. No; he is free on Sunday. He is at liberty to go, or not to go.—Accordingly, he turns aside, and wanders elsewhere. He has business, perhaps.—And yet, after all, he *does* visit his field.

"It is true that he had to pass very near it; and this gave him an opportunity. He looks at it, but not with any intention of entering. What should he do there?—And yet he *does* enter.

"At least it is probable that he will not work in it. He wears his Sunday best. His blouse and shirt are white and clean. Nothing hinders him, however, from plucking up a weed or casting away a stone. And yonder is a stump which annoys him greatly; but he has not his pick-axe with him, and that must wait until to-morrow.

"So, he crosses his arms, and stands with a serious and anxious gaze. For a long time he looks—a very long time—and seems lost in oblivion. At last, if he thinks himself observed, if he perceives a passer-by, he departs with lingering steps. At some thirty paces he stops again, wheels round, and casts on his field a last deep, thoughtful glance; a glance, for him who knows how to read it, full of enthusiasm, of heart, and of devotion."—(*Jules Michelet*, "*Le Peuple.*")

The Soil is a power. This we see under Tropical zones, where

the sun, and the warm and fertile moisture, seem sufficient for life. In Brazil, Auguste St. Hilaire saw with surprise the luxuriant virgin forests cut through as clean as if done by a razor, and nothing left but a few stunted shrubs. A vein of ferruginous sand striking across the forest had produced this aridity. There only, where the soil became sandy, the virgin forest lost its sombre tints and tangled luxuriance.

Our temperate climates, with their soberer vegetation, do not less clearly explain, in the variety of the vegetable carpet, that power of its hidden elements, its inner activities, that spirit of life which circulates underneath, and even makes the plant something different from itself. Its groves of oaks, and firs, and beeches; its light, delicate breadths of meadow-grass or succulent fodder; its fields of wheat, barley, rye, oats, and maize; its roots, which, like the beet-root, seek nourishment at a depth of six or seven feet; its vines on the stony hill-sides or chalky plains,—these speak not only of what they receive from above of sunshine and air, but what they derive from below, from the maternal bosom.

It is a vast mystery. The smallest blade of grass which dies under our feet knows more of it than we do. What might we not be told by the old mountain-pine, near heaven with its arrowy crest, and diving deep into the night with its far-stretching roots! One stormy day, when I saw him bending, and sweeping the earth, and complaining—he so wise and prudent!—under the contradictions of the wind, I had so tender a pity for him that he spoke to me, and reässured me. He told me the secret of the elasticity which made him yield and bend in obedience to the will of the gale. It was because he had chosen for his birth-place a rich, soft soil, very easily penetrated; a clayey, unctuous soil, pliant, but yet tenacious.

Quite different would be the story told by the poor heather, which has not even the wherewithal to make any leaves, but possesses simply a number of fine little needles, so as to breathe a little, and defy death. The soil belonging to her is but a sieve—shifting, dry, ungrateful sand—from which she derives scarcely any nutriment. If,

unhappily, a dry wind sweeps over the barrenness of the moorland, she falls consumed, and blackened, as it were, by the fire of heaven.

And yet she loves to live there. She is accustomed to the poverty of the soil which almost famishes her. A rich soil would be injurious. See, then: a pine which loves the clay, and a heath which prefers the sand. But all plants are not so abstemious. Many, even of the most modest, require a variety in their food. I have here the history of a little grain of oats, which one would never have thought to be a great eater. And yet, how many things were necessary to it! Without silica, its stem could neither have risen nor supported itself,—would have remained pale and drooping. Without lime, it had died at its second leaf. Without soda, unable to aggregate other elements, it would not have exceeded three inches in height. Without iron, it must have been feeble, irregular, and pale of colour. And without phosphorus, its spikes had never flowered.

Thus, a number of plants less skilful than their sober sisters in sustaining life on the simple inert sand—the silica—demand a varied aliment. It is wrong to accuse them of greedy appetites. For they require so many things in order that they may work, and provide a richer banquet for man, or his servants, the animals. They ask much in order to give more. Let us thank their avidity.

A French traveller, journeying in Finland, saw a labourer sowing a field with barley, which would never germinate. "Why then do you persist?" said he. The peasant answered, "You do not see, sir, that this black earth demands and awaits its food. How should I refuse it?"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE EPOPŒAS OF THE TREE.

Upon the smoking islet, which rises from the bosom of the old world (nothing more than a rock as yet), the plant already has appeared.

There is neither earth nor sunshine. Must it wait for them ?—No.

That there is no sunshine is so much the better. Were it not for the heavy shroud of vapours—this globe and the sun, confronting each other, face to face, in their twofold heat—no life could have begun.

And, in truth, it was not an easy task, even as things were, to spring into existence on that siliceous soil, which only yesterday was crystallized; to draw food and energy from the silex and disintergated quartz. Strong in its weakness, the plant found in this rude food the wherewithal to strengthen its nature, to straighten its stems, and gradually to shoot upward. In

every direction, and even as far as the Poles; the globe was gradually invested in that immense mantle of vegetation which at the present day we discover, all black and charred, in the depths of the earth.

There is nothing at all commonplace in this first dream of life.

Who would believe it? The ideal of this world of ours, when sunless and without soil, its first essay, its earliest attempt, was the Tree.

An elegant tree, charmingly beautiful, with most delicate fronds and admirable nervures, so delicately defined that nothing has surpassed them. This beautiful tree was the Fern.

Partial to the shade, it obtained a kind of obscure stimulus from the light. The rays were few, and moderate; afforded, as it is said, only a chemical light, which in the dim vapours acts with gentle power.

But how did each graceful creature hold itself erect? If some of them were born on a soft soil, made ready for them by tender mosses, others had but the rock on which to root themselves. Ah, happily the winds were not yet born.

The fern, with its scanty elements, was compelled to regulate as cheaply as possible the economy which would secure its permanency. It was of opinion that if it carried its wood in the centre of the plant, this wood could not provide it with a firm and stable axis.

Therefore, it came to the resolution that it would strengthen its circumference, and it made for itself a broken ring. This was an industrial process analogous to that of the polypes of the South Sea, which, in constructing their circular islands, or *atolls*, leave open a point or two for the entrance of the water that supplies them with food.

The sea which nourishes the fern, is its pith. It circulates through the openings in the ring, and in this way feeds the fronds. But the fronds thus nourished supply the plant, their mother, out of gratitude, with the aerial element, that heavy atmosphere, full of substance, which would have suffocated *us*. It was greedy of this food, however, if we may judge from the numerous vessels it has created for this purpose in its ring. These delicate spiral vessels, ascending with the stem, like so many spiral staircases, are but the play of its respiration.

The daughter of Twilight, with its irregular ring and its fantastic hieroglyphs (its ligneous cells, first attempts at consolidation), has all the appearance of seeking, and of being, an enigma. Nature, in her first hour of creation, did not foresee what her offspring might become. A plant, or an animal? Its fern has neither flower nor seed; nothing but a sporule—a mere spark of life. Yet, weak as it seems, it reigns in every region of the globe, and for tens of thousands of centuries has prepared for our use that powerful and concentrated *humus*—too powerful for the plant—*coal*. Which is, as it were, the soul of buried ages; and springs to-day from the bosom of the earth in spirit and flame—the new force of the world.

It did not yield until the new day dawned which was to create beings of light—beings able to endure the sun, and to absorb its radiance; to impregnate themselves with it thoroughly, and to brighten like its image; whose leaves would be so many rays.

The dull, solitary herb-tree which we have been contemplating exists no more. It belonged to a wholly different age of the world; an age of alliance between the Tree and the Man,—those two children of the sun, the one stationary, the other wandering.

But Nature, still a novice, did not achieve at her first essay the marvel of the vegetable world, the noble and shapely Palm. She attempted it, indeed, but corrected her attempt in a singular and almost bizarre type, which in itself alone suggested three trees at once. In its foliage, a fern; in its timber, a fir; in its flower and fruit it dreamed of becoming a palm. Less elegant, nevertheless. It rose upwards with difficulty, and seemed to droop towards the earth, as if somewhat obstructed or congested. It was but a cycad, after all.

An architectural tree, the palm ceased to form the broken ring, but made it complete. It strengthened itself in a still better fashion.

It derived strength from its solid materials, diffusing everywhere through its timber the abundant sap. It built for itself, so to speak, stout columns, which supported it on the earth — columns fastened together for their greater solidity, and at intervals entwined with one another.

And now behold in it a proud and noble creation, which astonishes the eye in the very localities which seem the most antagonistic to any type of life. It rears itself in the desert between two flames: a burning sky of steel, and a white mirror of sand. On the rough and broken bank of madrepores, which that populace of workers occupied but yesterday, a new and unexpected denizen soon makes its appearance,—the cocoa-nut palm. It seems to take possession of the seething seas which, from the Southern Pole, hasten to spend their fury upon its little isle. It is the king of the deep. Everywhere in the great Southern Ocean it waves to and fro its crest. Under the influence of the breeze, has it not gained a voice? And well does it understand the creature who, born but yesterday, already grows weak in the presence of a too powerful nature, and to-morrow will have ceased to be!

The poor Tahitian, in the evening, blends his sighs with the sighs of the palm-tree:

Le palmier croîtra,
Le corail s'étendra,
Et l'homme périra.

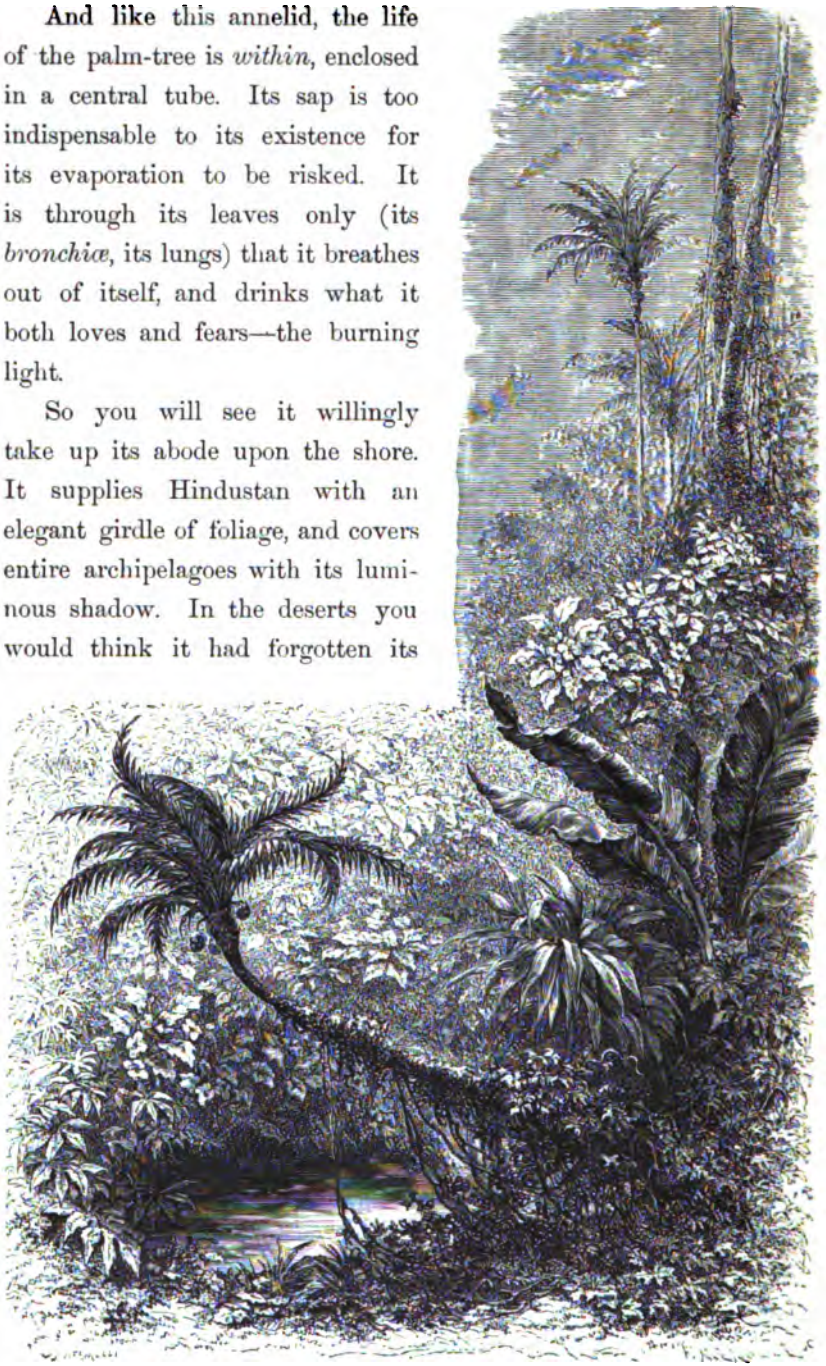
The palm-tree will grow,
And the coral will spread,
When man shall be dead.

The palm is not only a tree, but the creator of a world. With a little fresh water, which it carefully gathers into a basin or a small brook, it sets about procuring a small vegetable population to bear it company. Little animals, sprung from one knows not where, nor how, will soon gain an asylum in its shade, and sport merrily around it.

Its beautiful floating plume reminds one of the beautiful ocean annelid, which would seem to have raised aloft and expanded in the air its living net, that it may breathe on high, and in the light.

And like this annelid, the life of the palm-tree is *within*, enclosed in a central tube. Its sap is too indispensable to its existence for its evaporation to be risked. It is through its leaves only (its *bronchiæ*, its lungs) that it breathes out of itself, and drinks what it both loves and fears—the burning light.

So you will see it willingly take up its abode upon the shore. It supplies Hindustan with an elegant girdle of foliage, and covers entire archipelagoes with its luminous shadow. In the deserts you would think it had forgotten its



need of water; but, on the contrary, it bathes its feet in subterranean channels. Who knows, indeed, whether the circular oases, sprinkled like chaplets over Africa, like the islands of the Southern Sea, may not be so many islets or atolls, which the polypes have left behind them in the dried-up sea of the Sahara?

The fern lived in poverty. It is with difficulty that the palm-tree also gains its food; but it has this advantage, that instead of sand and quartz, its nutriment is almost the life, the scarcely extinct soul of the graceful coral which built up for it its island.

And thus, being better fed, it becomes, surely and definitely, a tree. It flowers, and it bears fruit. It is necessary, however, that the child should be content with an economical supply, and a single nurse (or cotyledon). Our European trees have two, and hence enjoy a fuller life. And it is a severe, a fatal decree for the great family of Palms, which are otherwise so favoured, that when they love they die.

Love, but only once! For when your destiny is accomplished, you return, O tree, into the bosom of Nature.

It has been your long desire. You have dreamed of your flowering beauty. You have worn your wealth of blossom. Bearing proudly on high, on your crest, all that was *yourself*, you have exhausted your vitality.

Do not complain; you will die while in full maturity. The aloe at its destined hour bursts forth, grows twenty feet,—and is no more.

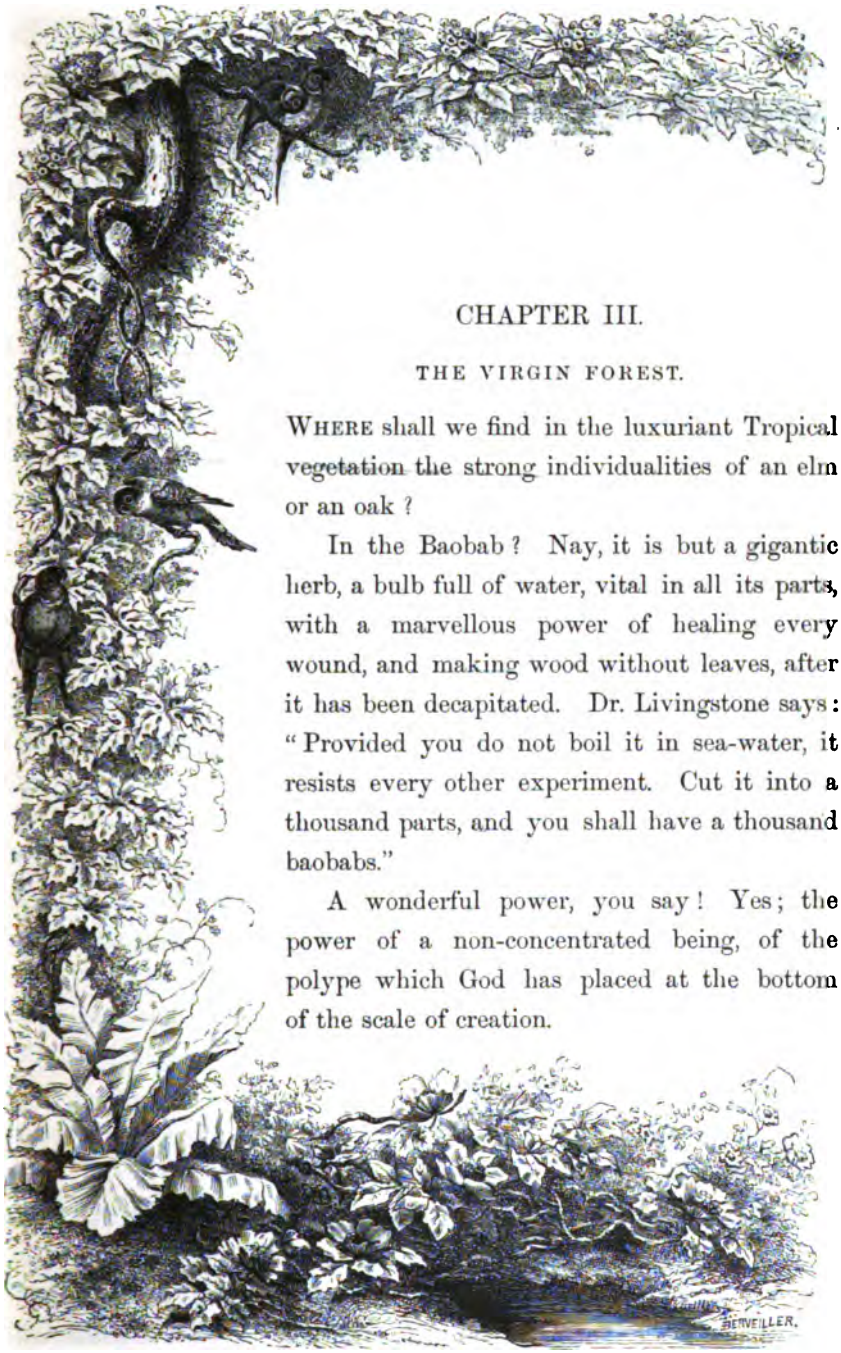
More impressive still appears this love in death, when a whole forest of bamboos perishes in a similar fashion.

Auguste St. Hilaire saw a grove erect, and sixty feet in height. Fifteen months later, passing the same way, he saw but a desert.

Our more prudent Northern trees divide their forces, and do not exhaust them in a single effort.

In their various branches, which do not flower simultaneously, the losses are less serious; the sap flows to the points which languish, and pours into them a new life.

This high equilibrium should prevail in the harmonious climates where Nature offers no obstacle to her own action, and never impedes her own course. In the just balance which accompanies liberty, we see our beautiful trees—elm, and beech, and oak—follow the alternations of the two organic movements; growing from the circumambient bark to the centre (like the primeval trees), and expanding, radiating through the wood from the centre to the circumference. They resemble a star, which, small at first, goes on enlarging, and projecting all around its vitality and its radiance. They seem in accordance with their father, the sun, and follow him in his development. They do not inclose all their life-power in their centre, like the palm; they convey it to the exterior, that it may the better feel the light. They do not always enjoy it, but feel it retiring and returning, according to the seasons. And therefore they love it all the more. On its return, they pay it homage in the serene ornament of their flowers and leaves. But even in the profoundest depths of their being, in their annual rhythms, in their circular waves, they express the sun's revolutions, number them, and record their history. The palm reflects it only in its crown; but it is in its deep heart and concentric circles that the oak has absorbed the sun.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE VIRGIN FOREST.

WHERE shall we find in the luxuriant Tropical vegetation the strong individualities of an elm or an oak ?

In the Baobab ? Nay, it is but a gigantic herb, a bulb full of water, vital in all its parts, with a marvellous power of healing every wound, and making wood without leaves, after it has been decapitated. Dr. Livingstone says: "Provided you do not boil it in sea-water, it resists every other experiment. Cut it into a thousand parts, and you shall have a thousand baobabs."

A wonderful power, you say! Yes; the power of a non-concentrated being, of the polype which God has placed at the bottom of the scale of creation.

How many of these lower forms of life flourish in the bosom of the Virgin Forests! Are the trees themselves *really* trees? Lo, in three years they grow larger than ours in fifteen.

In these burning regions Nature seems to have but a single thought —to suppress without pity all feeble existence which would mingle death with the broad current of circulation, and prevent the passing air from spreading afar the poisonous effluvia.

The Virgin Forest is the child of hot, damp countries; its greatest beauty is developed in regions where the rains fall frequently and heavily, blended with quick outbursts of light. Water, and the glance of the sun!

The over-stimulated vegetation assumes every conceivable form; the lianas mount adventurously, and entangle themselves with one another. The fig-trees, that they may sooner bear fruit, allow their branches to develop into roots; and these, on touching the soil, spring up into new fig-trees. All existence seems possessed by the same impulse. Hence those expansions and capricious entanglements, which are so many attempts, assaults, and stratagems to gain their end more quickly, and see all the sooner the flashing heaven.

Such and such a tree, of round and ample crest, feeling that under this form it can never pierce the sombre canopy, changes its manner of life, is metamorphosed into a liana, and coils round and about its more fortunate neighbour, which already hovers on high. It mounts as *he* mounts; and finally emerging from the twilight, and into the sunshine, resumes its original form.—(*Livingstone.*)

In the forest the *struggle* for life is so desperate that the *duration* of life is affected by it.

In the splendid forests of Brazil the tree seldom lives beyond forty or fifty years. Its children spring from its roots and seeds, press closely around, choke, and kill it. Its decomposition is rapid, though concealed under all the forms of life. There the orchids suspend their fantastic flowers, and the ferns softly undulate their fronds. It is just

as if this death were alive, even to the moment when it sinks and falls under the weight of the ephemeral forest.

Elsewhere, it suffices for a storm to change the physiognomy of the forests. Warrens, in his survey of British India, has painted the scene with marvellous effect.

Its locality is in the Western Ghauts. The rainy season invades the Malabar coast at an early date. Already, a few showers have begun to fall. These are not, says Warrens, the benignant rains which *our* gray sky dispenses. They form a cataract, ushered in by frightful peals of thunder. Soon, for hours, for whole days, the rain descends perpendicularly and with a resistless force. The ravines, the only channels effected by these convulsions of Nature, become so many furious torrents. They carry everything before them. The strength, and courage, and disciplined intellect of man are the laughter of the elements. He falls by the side of the leaf, and, like the leaf, is swept onward by the waterspout, which swallows up everything in its fury.

Down below is accumulated the refuse and dead matter which the currents have carried along with them. At the bottom of the valleys sleeps the heavy air of the *malaria;* but on high, on the hill-slopes, it is deliverance! The teak, a brother of the oak, breathes again, and no longer feels surrounded and suffocated by parasitical existences. The sandal diffuses its perfumes freely; the deodara cedar spreads abroad its tress-like foliage: all noble and haughty trees, which form the true beauty of Hindustan.

There the elephant displays his peaceful gravity, and the tiger his sanguinary appetites. Legions of birds pursue one another, and mingle among the leafy boughs the magic of their plumage.

The Brazilian forests seem yet more alive with their numerous inhabitants. And there, more than in Hindustan, each voice obtrudes and re-echoes—and, particularly, that of the bird.

In the dense shade, and all along the sleeping waters, the *oazin*, the reptile-eater, gives vent occasionally to his half-choked sighs. The

*grue-caurale*, like an immense nocturnal butterfly, hisses over the livid swamp, like a serpent. Perched on the tops of the lofty trees, the ant-eater announces the hour. The *Cottinga Averano*, like a good blacksmith, strikes the anvil with his hammer. A gigantic frog plays the part of the woodcutter: one hears the dry, grating noise of the axe as it cleaves into the trunk.

All these are voices of day, and speak of work. Now that evening comes, other voices awake. The night-heron, with its lowing, mimics the sound of oxen. Above, among the trees, the little men of the wood collect together, and sorrowing over the day that has gone, make their sad adieux to the light—sad wails and plaintive cries, like the noise of the wind as it passes through the branches. Afar, above the flooded savannah, hovers the loud voice of the kamichi, the powerful bird which destroys so many obscure existences.

Less vast, but far more gloomy, the forests which densely flourish at the foot of the volcanoes of Java. Nowhere else can be found a more active focus, a more rapid exchange between life and death. Choked, and so full of shade that the traveller needs a torch at noon-day to discover his whereabouts, they smoke, like a vegetable volcano. Their shadows engender fantastic creations—capricious and sickly—sometimes, monstrous parasites, to which no analogue exists in all the world (except it be in Sumatra). On high, in every direction, the pale tresses are suspended of white orchids which forget that they are flowers, and disport themselves like fantastic insects. Bromelias clinging to the dead trunk, and living only upon unwholesome vapours, twist themselves in endless coils, like a cluster of vipers.

Lower down, on the trunk of the trees, a mushroom, an enormous sponge enormously dilated, intoxicated with azote, seeks to absorb a further quantity by spreading like a flower, and so, by checking its singular petals, it develops a corolla of six feet in circumference. Its existence is equivocal, and the rose-hue of its pale flesh does not speak in its favour. Is it a life, or a mimicry?—a dream of Nature? It soon dissolves this morbid flower, and smells from afar the carrion.

These Tropical forests, which have been so frequently described, make one forgetful, through their fecundity and wild excess of reproduction, of others of which one speaks too seldom—those forests of the eternal rains which, especially in Africa, supply the Equator with a belt of shade. The sun never penetrates into their depths. They are so many low-lying crypts, into which a few pallid gleams with difficulty glide.—(*Du Chaillu.*)

In those regions which one had thought the land of light, the heavens are shrouded in gloom. For ever and for ever weighs upon them a canopy of heavy clouds, which, nevertheless, is scattered on the slightest agitation. The rain falls three hundred and sixty days in the year. The steaming waters are anew worked upon by the sun, which, invisible and powerful behind the black screen, heats, and heats until they seethe, the vapours. They reäscend, or *will* reäscend, if others from on high should not, in their downward course, force them back again. Earth would never more know aught of heaven, if the storm and the thunder did not shatter at intervals the gloomy ring encircling it.

These battlings of the vapours, and these diverse electricities combining together, should assuredly prove fertile. And yet life seems absent; and Light is wanting. We know this without looking. The vast solitudes are dumb; they are all Night and Silence! Why does the flower open her bosom? She will fruitlessly attempt to rise, if it is to see the sun more clearly. She feels its warmth, and she waits, and delays. But all is eternal barrenness and inaction.

On the soil, the tree, dipping its feet into black and feverish waters, would fain, it seems, avoid them. From the impure mud it extricates itself, its roots describing an infinity of curves and serpentine coils. Sometimes it plucks them all from the slime and lifts them up on high, as on a tripod.

Under these shades no songs are any longer audible. Wherewithal should the bird live in the inundated desert? You may now and then hear above you a few tiny cries, and in the mud the hoarse sound of the reptile as it drags itself painfully on its way.

If, however, the traveller perseveres, he may, on emerging from the marsh, have the chance of seeing a great isolated tree which, without any branches up to a height of more than twenty-five feet from the soil, crowns itself with a noble dome, with a canopy of leafy boughs, close-bound by lianas to the tree. And thus it forms an admirable roof to preserve its guest from the perpetual deluge, while, owing to its elevation, it protects him from the attacks of wild beasts and serpents. —(*See Du Chaillu.*)

This is the ingenious work of an ape, the nohiégo, a brother of the chimpanzee. Seated in safety, and perfectly dry, he embraces the tree under his canopy, and sleeps in peace.

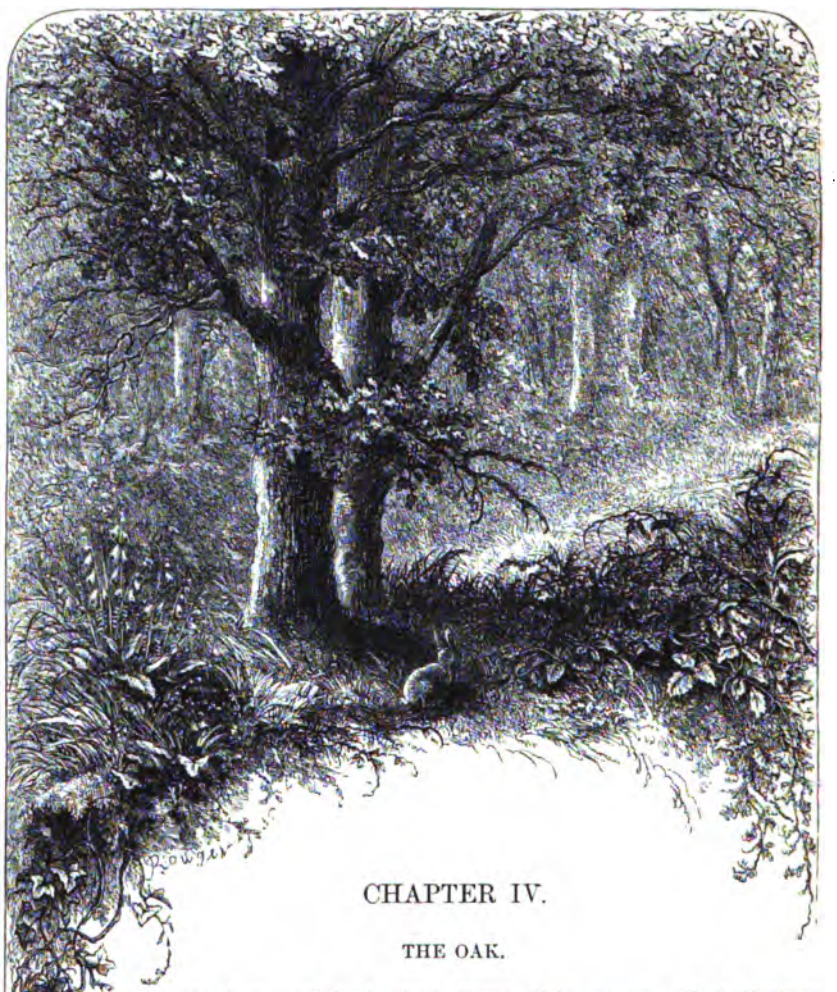
Our prudent hermit lives apart in the solitude. But close beside him, on a neighbouring tree, he constructs a similar nest for his consort. The two spouses work there together. *She* passes to him the branches and lianas; *he* weaves and plaits them. Unfortunately, the artist does not long enjoy his work. Whether it be that his food, consisting chiefly of succulent leaves, gets exhausted in the vicinity, or that the rain forces its way through his roof, at the end of eight or ten days he wanders afar, to reconstruct for his poor household a couple of new asylums.

The forest which conceals this rare inhabitant in its distant hiding-places and scattered clearings does not the less present all the appearance of a gloomy desert. It has not the sacred horror of a temple in the solemn shades. Rather is its character funereal. And from its livid obscurity, you would think you were entering the region of the dead.

Even in countries which are as yet unafflicted by the eternal rains, the forest preserves its terrors. The negro, wandering around, does not willingly direct his glance towards it. Suppose he should see, burning in its mysterious obscurity, the two glowing eyes of the lord of the forest, the lion! But though he does not see him, he is equally anxious to propitiate him, and convert him into a favouring deity. He carves a little *fetich*, endeavouring to make it resemble the monster, and, with trembling steps, proceeds to the border of the

wood. Even after this, he is not a whit more reässured. If, unfortunately, his fire should die out at nightfall, he will fear to stir, will hunger and thirst rather than venture as far as the neighbour who lives close beside him. At this hour of dread, who knows what he might see?—(*Dr. Livingstone.*)

In the moist forests of Guiana, hot, gloomy, and crepuscular, Humboldt, with an Indian guide, was desirous of visiting a grotto inhabited by the nocturnal birds called *guacharos*. The Indian durst not enter. "'Men,' he said, 'should fear those spots which neither Zis (the sun) nor the Nama (the moon) illuminate. To go to the guacharos is to rejoin his fathers—to die.' Mute and meditative, he examined the white stems of the plants which had germinated in the shade. These pallid denizens of the night seemed to him like the *phantoms* of plants, banished from the land of the living, and doomed for ever to dwell in obscurity."—(*Humboldt.*)



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE OAK.

I COULD have wished that from this ocean of indistinct existences some individuality had clearly disengaged itself, as an image of sustained effort; slow and patient; affording me in a tree a hero of labour. But I have found none such in the Virgin Forest.

The tree, superlatively strong,—whose very name signifies *force* ("robur"),—the OAK has well deserved its vigour and indestructibility. Even from the very first, its life may teach us lessons of gravity and constancy. We may learn from it how to found one's fortune by long-concentrated labour, long-concealed with-

out any thought of the world; how one develops into a mighty tree which defies the storm.

From its birth it sets before itself this end: it knows that everything depends upon the beginnings. We see this plainly from the way in which it works when it has but just emerged from the acorn. Above ground you as yet see nothing; just as if it were not born. Look below. How straight it has planted its root, like a stake in the heart of the earth. At this moment it toils for two.

The superb oak which, a hundred years hence, will win so much admiration, is asleep to-day. It is waiting to mount towards the light that below affords a nourishment to the root scarcely born for providing it. Slow is the oak, just as it is strong.

It has none of the impatience of ephemeral lives. It will allow the herbs and shrubs, in their hot desire to see the spring, to pass before it. A little later, it will even ask of them their light floating shadow to shelter its young stem from the too potent ardours of the sun. Two years more, and still it will have but a relative life; no leaves to nourish it, or, at the most, only some tiny scales which are simply rudimentary.

All this, because when one is an oak, one has no need to venture rashly, to mount quickly, to be beautiful, elegant, and feeble. The dream of the oak, as I have said, is to be strong; and for this reason, before nourishing its stem, it makes its root powerful.

Nor is food what, at first, it seeks. Before all, it needs a foundation. It will not always be a tiny sapling. A time will come when, upon the hill-side, it will extend its mighty branches, and weigh, with all the weight of its immense crown, upon the deep valley. Then the winds and the wild envious gale would be its master, if, underground, it had not close-clasped the soil, and embraced with its bowels of oak the bowels of its mother.

A great work this, for a child who has just been thrown upon the world! It is not, however, without assistance. And it has, too, its milk, and its two strong nurses (cotyledons), who do not quit it, but share its subterranean existence. At other times they have seen the sun, and lived in the sunshine. It seems that they see it still, and

supply to the root a little of that nutriment which the leaf would endeavour to seek on high, if it had already come.

Finally, it has pushed forth a long and solid pivot, and strengthened its axis. It takes possession of all around it, projects its strong roots in every direction; roots without hair, but covered with delicate papillæ. These are so many aspiring mouths which drink in with the water all that the water has been able to dissolve, the mineral juices of the earth. An inert and inorganic food, on which man and animals would perish. But it is one of its peculiar powers, that it can transform the dead into the living; that it can take the sand, and the silex, and the sandstone, and the limestone,—all those lethargic materials,—and awaken them, and work them, and transform them into the potent sap which nourishes the heart of the oak, and gives it strength to endure a thousand years. It is with these little suckers that it searches, questions, feels, and penetrates the rude outer world. How many bruises, and checks, and obstacles will it have to encounter! Here, a great boulder to avoid; there, the sharp edge of a pebble, or some thin vein of gravel. Its danger lies in the fact that it has no power of self-concentration, of hiding its roots within itself. The thing is impossible; these roots are also hands; their mission is twofold—to feed it, and to anchor it firmly. It is indispensable, therefore, that it should use them externally as implements of work.

Its severe miner's toil lasts about forty years, without affording it an opportunity for a single day to indulge in lighter thoughts. Our dumb worker has not always good fortune, as we see already in its irregular and, frequently, storm-twisted branches. Do not let us accuse it of caprice. It is the effect of the vicissitudes of fate, the revolution of good or bad years, of poor or rich soils. All things are not uniform when one lives for centuries. Here the earth was dry, and had not water sufficient to assist the sap in mounting higher; the last bourgeons are dead with thirst, and the branch is not completed. Further on, the soil proved too ungrateful; the root could not find in time a better vein; it has perished, and with it the bough which it supported. Dead, and withered, it waits for a gust of wind to carry it away. How many times, in our little grove of oaks, have I had a

revelation of these hidden vicissitudes! The tree was suffering, and on one side losing its strength, and unable any longer to throw out foliage in spring. We looked about, opened up the earth, and were not long in discovering the secret of its disease.

Whenever it was possible to apply a remedy, we saw it, in the following years, starting afresh, and re-investing itself in verdure, with a joyous renewal of energy.

The oak lives more upon the soil than upon the light. It absorbs too much of the spirit of the earth. This is plainly visible in its wrinkled bark, which imprisons it so closely, and soon will hold it captive. Though it has not yet grown old; though it has scarcely exceeded one hundred years; see, already it is furrowed with deep wrinkles! Here by its side springs the beech, all smooth and comely, with flexible movements, bending hither and thither like a free creature. But he, when the wind rages, seems, in his immobility, a stranger to the tempest. Only on high, and at the summit of the tree, you may hear, as it were, the hoarse sound of the swollen waves. It is its dense ligneous foliage, which will scarcely yield, but resists and defies the storm.

If, like the beech or the elm, it could respire all its life through its first delicate bark; or if, like the birch and the plane, it moulted every year, and changed its skin, it would be ever in harmony with the air and the light. But its sap, loaded with crystals and strong substances, does not circulate unobstructed. It deposits a part on its way, incrusts its own channel, and daily renders its course much slower. Every spring it must renew its bark, and the old, being unwilling to slip off, and clinging with powerful fibres to the trunk, will gradually be, as it were, ensepulchred.

This deeply-furrowed bark is not one of the least beauties of the oak, yet, under the compression put upon it, it runs a great risk of being suffocated. It must bethink itself how it may still breathe. Inside, certain large vessels are opened which, from the leaf to the root, circulate the air, and the vivifying action of the light. Yet this grand solitary is not the less apart from the world. He holds with it no other communication than through his foliage. And the latter, ligneous and

varnished, apparently respires but little. How then shall he live, when he has raised his head on high, and struck his roots so low? His two poles are so far apart from one another. He must, in truth, possess a soul, and this soul it must be which draws him from his captivity. *He* is slow, but *she* is winged. She travels swiftly, is never stationary, does not blend herself with aught, but everywhere and always is distinguishable in its own pure essence (*azote*). In spring, it travels with the sap, and from root to bud, stimulating the young life to leap from the profound sleep of winter. Without her, would this oak awaken? We see that he scarcely hears her summons. Round about him, all other life has sprung up anew, and while *he* is sleeping, the woods are green. But when once he has felt her impulse, he delays no longer, and, though slower than his neighbours, in autumn he will work.

Others, too, around him, have flowered and fructified. But this boon is not one which he can enjoy every year. An oak is made to be austere. It does not suit him to have any feeble offshoots. He wills that they should be strong, and if he have the power, scatters a sea of acorns round him. A noble ambition; for fruit, a forest! This being his object, he must for a long time accumulate, and practise self-denial. If both earth and sky prove favourable, he may, once in three years, pour forth this grand swarm of oaks. If not, he will wait full seven years.

But when this rare and happy opportunity arrives; when at last he shall smooth his front, and flower; when you shall see the long spikes of a pale green, tinged with gold, floating from his branches; even then he is self-observant still, and continues absorbed in his dream. Close beside him, the prodigals of the wood will give an entire branch to the flower; but not so he. To the future, to the work of paternity, he devotes but a moiety of himself.

Well does he know that life is not easy; and, therefore, even in his love he is reserved, moderate, and austere. In return, he gains strength, and that capacity of durability which makes this royalty of the oak. The centuries have woven for his brow a crown. The contemporary of our fathers, he has sheltered them under his shade; like

them, he has seen the revolutions pass; but stronger than them, he has braved the storm. Who, then, may dare to touch this son of Time, to attack him with axe or saw, to topple down the temple whither so many departed souls have carried their dream and their prayer?

But pitiless Man cuts down the oak. The earth is wroth thereat, and Nature shrinks in horror.

Un murmure eclata sous ses ombres paisibles,
J'entendis des sanglots et des bruits menaçants;
Je vis errer des bois les hôtes invisibles,
Pour te défendre, hélas, contre l'homme impuissants.

Le flot triste hésita dans l'urne des fontaines
Le haut du mont trembla sous les pins chancelants,
Et l'aquilon roula dans les gorges profondes,
L'echo des grands soupirs arrachés à tes flancs.

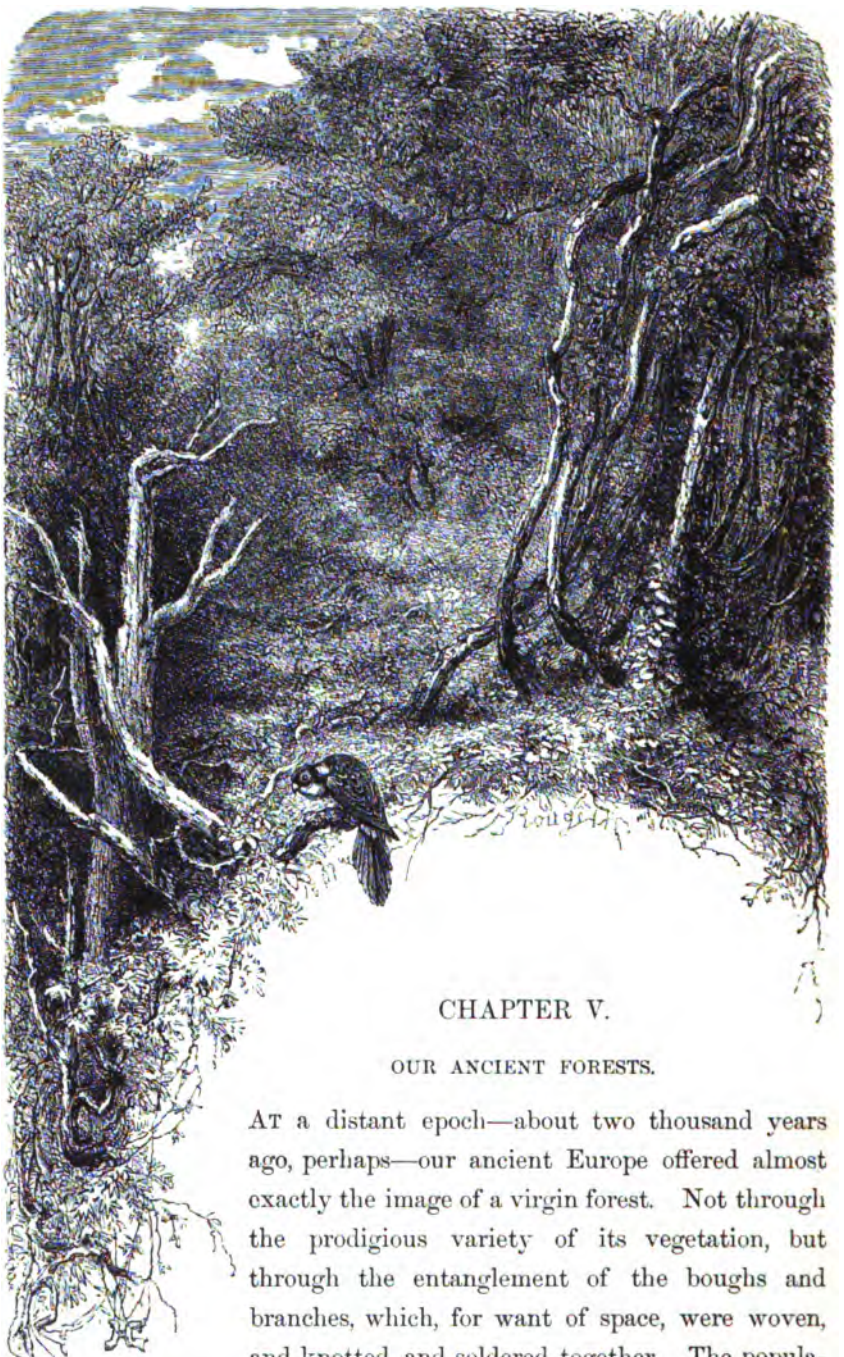
Ta chute laboura comme un coup de tonnerre,
Un arpent tout entier sur le sol paternel;
Et quand son sein meurtri reçut ton corps, la terre
Eut un gémissement terrible et solennel.

[V. DE LA PRODE, *Odes et Poèmes.*]

Beneath the leafy boughs a murmur rose,
And sobs I heard, and cries of menace loud,
While from the shades the unseen ones depart,
Too weak, alas, to guard thee against man.

The sad wave lingered in the fountain-urn,
Beneath its pines the mountain-summit shook;
And, through the deep dim valleys, on the breeze
Were borne the echoes of thy mighty sighs.

Thy fall shall like a thunder-peal resound,
And roods of thy paternal soil shall quake;
And when Earth's wounded breast receives thy frame,
The world thou'lt fill with one vast solemn wail.



## CHAPTER V.

### OUR ANCIENT FORESTS.

At a distant epoch—about two thousand years ago, perhaps—our ancient Europe offered almost exactly the image of a virgin forest. Not through the prodigious variety of its vegetation, but through the entanglement of the boughs and branches, which, for want of space, were woven, and knotted, and soldered together. The popula-

tion of the West was then very scanty, and the tree, in itself alone, possessed a great moiety of the earth.

Gaul, Belgium, and Germany made, as it were, but a single forest. Dense shadows everywhere obscured the light.

A dreary region, but less inhospitable than one might suppose;—more humid than cold; and enjoying, on the whole, an average degree of moderate and uniform warmth. The forest, having none to contend with it, stored up all the genial heat that came from the sun.

France, which, nowadays, is so varied by the contrasts of its vegetation, then seemed desirous of one thing only,—to clothe herself in a grand and noble garb.

And but for Man, who thinks himself the creator of the harmonies of the Earth, Europe would have admirably disposed of her forests. She would have doubled their density in the north-west, and on the east, whence comes the bitter life-killing wind of the Steppes. Then, however fierce at its departure, it would have encountered the wall of trees, and though raging madly, would have been compelled to yield before a rampart which, being mobile, was so much the more powerful.

To the south-west it would rather have opened up the woods, so as to receive the soft wind of the Ocean; and yet more, perhaps, the warm wind of the south, which stimulates the circulation of the sap. In this direction no lofty shades were needed, but flexible pines, which readily bend to let the breeze pass by; or else, on the loose shifting sand-dune, the bushy brakes and creeping plants over which the wind glides without obstruction.

In the mountains, and in hilly countries, it was in the caverns created by Nature as asylums, that primeval Man took up his abode, and everywhere we find his traces. But it was in the plain he sought his cradle, and his place of refuge in the forest. Less warm than the rocky cave, was it not, on the other hand, more secure? Through the enormous avenues of ancient oaks, and under the black shade of the yews, it was so much more easy for the fugitive to glide and disappear.

Even in our own days we see that they who fly from an oppressive tyranny still seek an asylum in the forests.

But in climates of Tropical power they are not adapted for man; whether because they attract, and store up for their own use, all the elements of vitality; or whether because insalubrious miasmas prevail under their leafy shades.

Our European forests were more human; they did not slay those who demanded an asylum of them. On the contrary, the inhabitant of our woods had a free and haughty gait. He enjoyed unbroken physical strength, for a pure and vivifying atmosphere circulated under the oaks.

The tyranny of the forest was to be found in a different direction; in its illusions, its phantasmagoria. It existed in those shadows which for ever travelled by your side, until you saw all kinds of fantastic things at the foot of the trees, as well as among their branches.

To-day, when we have ploughed over and sown nearly all our woods, we are unable to imagine the spectacle that must have been presented by time-old wildernesses of leaf and bough, which, in order to live together, and not to be stifled, had assumed a hundred capricious forms. The knotty and ripped-up oak, the twisted yew—a deformed and sometimes almost shapeless dwarf—these, of themselves alone, peopled the forest with visions. He who lived on its threshold, if he turned around, would fancy that he saw, in the evening especially, in the undefined twilight of the mists, the whole array of trunks bearing down upon him. He was nearly overcome with terror. Yonder trees, so old and venerable, would they ever die? At that hour their silence was so deep! What were the thoughts of all those dumb giants? Were they propitious?

In his even-tide visions and day-dreams, it was always they who came to trouble him. And yet he loved the forest with all his soul; she was his mother, his nurse, his sanctuary.

In this way arose that religion of the savage which planted everywhere a deity; those infinite beliefs which suppressed the icy desolations of an impersonal nature.

But do we not exaggerate the barbarism of that epoch? In Gaul and in Germany did the greedy and cruel gods long endure? I doubt it. The German nature shrunk from such a worship. As soon as a ray of light penetrated into the ancient Forest, the tyrant gods took their departure; and into their places glided divinities of a gentler inspiration. The tranquillized forest then became almost joyous. In the place of hairy satyr-like gods, concealed in the

neighbourhood of stagnant waters, or in the worm-eaten trunk of an old willow, dreaming always and ever of evil deeds, the new deities, or demigods rather, so far from oppressing us, were by us oppressed. A lament rises from the tree which the woodman fells—sometimes even the sound of a sob.

Man is anew *enchanted* by the forest; but this time his heart is moved, and he sympathizes or compassionates. These demigods, these goddesses (the beautiful fairies of the Middle Ages), loved, like man, to lodge themselves under the bark. Man built his cabin with it; they preferred the tree itself. Very small and very subtle they must have been—a mere breath—to have insinuated themselves under the rough envelope of an oak. But are they not too closely confined? One would say so, from the choked sigh which sometimes escapes them. The winds of the forest thence-

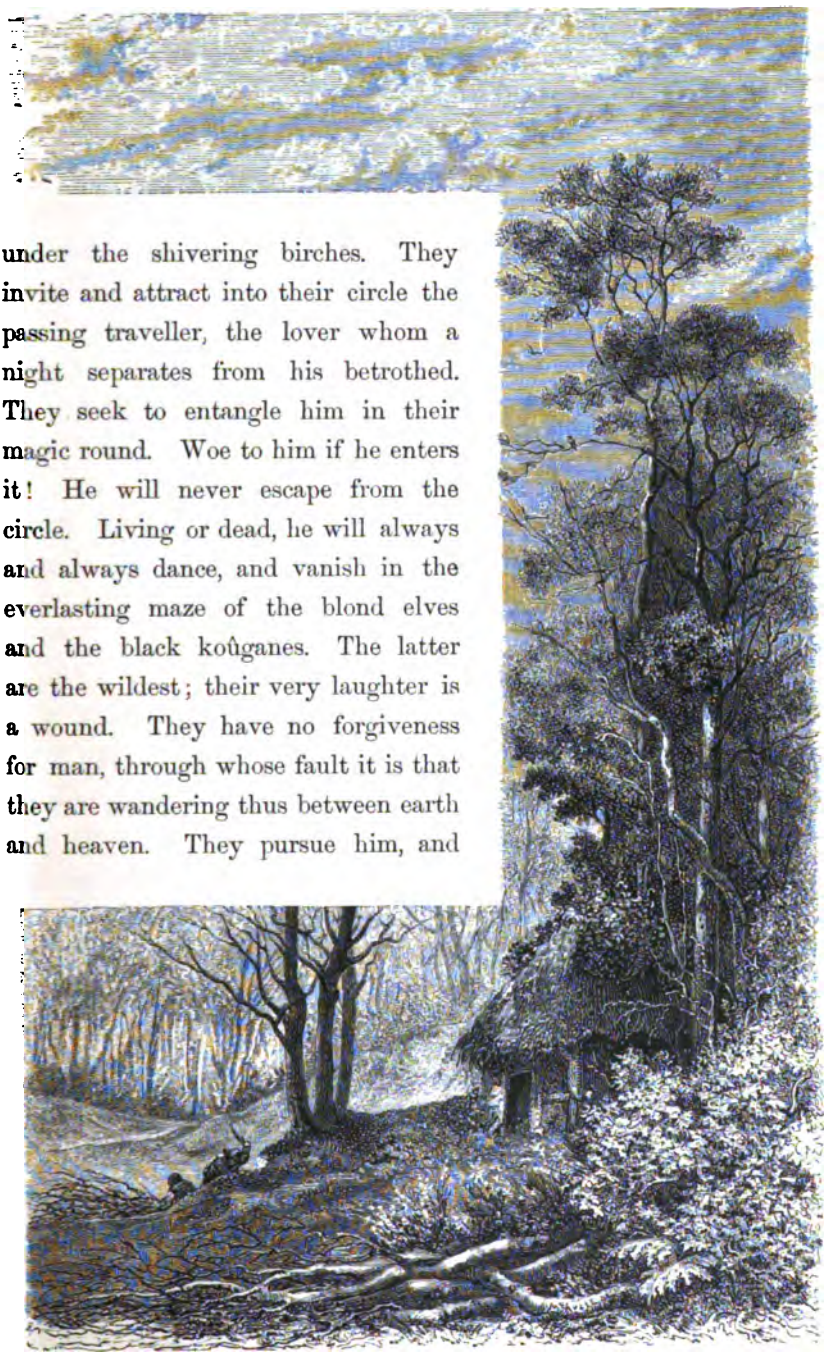
forth have taken a soul, a voice; the voice of weeping rather than of laughter.

In the trunks of the beeches, under the sombre oak and maple, rested, undoubtedly, the sedate gods, with grave thoughts, the ancient hermits of the country. Experience had rendered them wise and prudent. No one would touch those patriarchs, the elder brethren of man, and his protectors. If one must demand a sacrifice from the forest, one would rather take the young trees, which seemed to offer up themselves.

Yet under this flexible bark did not one incur the great risk of discovering other lives? The "little man" and "little woman of the wood" (a German legend) were concealed there, close to the sun and the light. Under a kind of veil they lived, and listened to everything. Scarcely were they touched before tears flowed forth, with a sound of gasping breath. What befell, then, if the woodman, to reconstruct his hut, stripped off the rugged bark? He started in the morning—the anxious gray-beard. A morning of spring: light shadows danced in the illuminated glades; the chaffinch sang, the blackbird whistled; the hawthorn was in blossom; everything seemed to be making holiday. His occupation will be more tolerable. He begins, and with one hand, which he tries to render safe, he smites a sapling oak. But observe, as the bark gives way all in a piece, what lamentations escape it, what moans, what a torrent of tears! Nay, more than tears;—a kind of pallid blood seems to mingle with them.

He pauses; he looks. Those eyes, which have never wept, perhaps, under their rough, heavy brows seem disturbed. He is inclined to fling away his hatchet, and to curse it! If he must smite the tree again in order to secure his daily bread, he first kneels down before it, and prays, and implores, with uncovered head and folded palms.

But behold, at last, the spirits exiled! The forest will no longer be their asylum. They wander in the moonlight, seeking in all directions the sweet shade and shelter they cannot find. They are no longer little, immovable, pensive souls. Sad and agitated, they glide by, it is said, in the evening breeze, dance on the tip of the blades of grass,



under the shivering birches. They invite and attract into their circle the passing traveller, the lover whom a night separates from his betrothed. They seek to entangle him in their magic round. Woe to him if he enters it! He will never escape from the circle. Living or dead, he will always and always dance, and vanish in the everlasting maze of the blond elves and the black koûganes. The latter are the wildest; their very laughter is a wound. They have no forgiveness for man, through whose fault it is that they are wandering thus between earth and heaven. They pursue him, and

make a sport of his heart, and of his loyal love; and, themselves possessing no capacity of devotion, find a pitiful amusement in troubling him with deceitful seductions.

Of milder mood seem the Nixis, which have taken refuge in the streams and lakes. Their songs make known to us that they ought to die. In very truth they are the tears of the soul which cannot ascend to gaze upon the heavens. But what wounds them deepest is the laughter, the mockery of the young and thoughtless:—

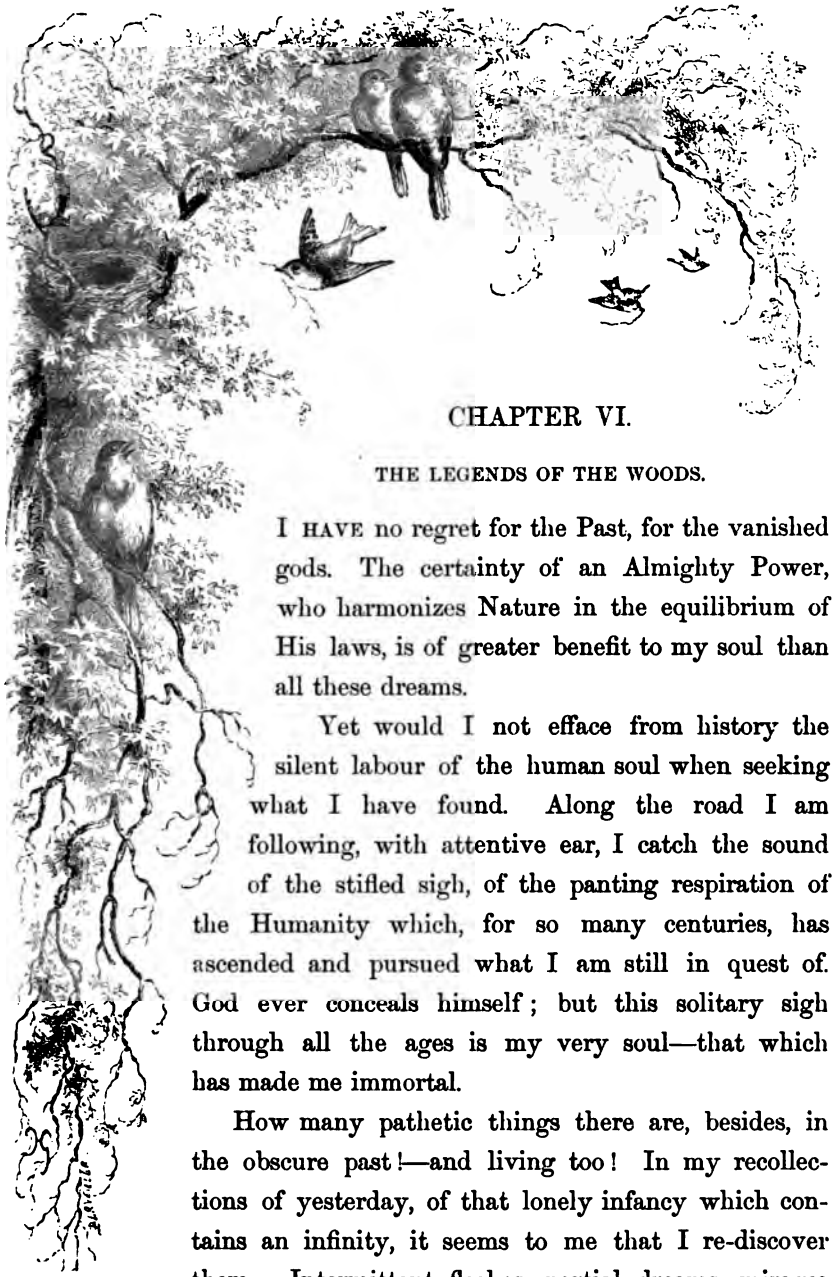
"Two children are sporting one evening on the bank of a river. A beautiful Nix rises out of the waters, with harp in hand, and begins to play. The merry, mischievous children tease him, and cry—'Why dost thou play, why dost thou sing, wicked Nix? Thou shalt never enter into heaven.' At these words the Nix flings away his harp, weeps bitterly, and sinks down into the depth of the stream. Whereat the little children are much amused; they return home, and tell everybody triumphantly that they have made the Nix weep.

"Their father, however, reproaches them for their cruelty; and orders them to go back to the stream, and console the unfortunate Nix.

"The children soon reach the bank—Nix is seated on the water, weeping and bewailing his fate. They say to him,—'Console thyself; our father says that the Saviour has also come for thee.'

"Thereupon the Nix resumes his harp, and plays his sweetest melodies. They are heard resounding through the valley for long hours after sunset—soft and vague, like the sound of a slumbering wave."*

* [The Nix, or water-spirit of Germany, is the subject of many picturesque legends, in which he is endowed, as in the story above related, with a semi-human nature, and is usually represented as lamenting greatly his exclusion, or supposed exclusion, from the divine mercies.]



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LEGENDS OF THE WOODS.

I HAVE no regret for the Past, for the vanished gods. The certainty of an Almighty Power, who harmonizes Nature in the equilibrium of His laws, is of greater benefit to my soul than all these dreams.

Yet would I not efface from history the silent labour of the human soul when seeking what I have found. Along the road I am following, with attentive ear, I catch the sound of the stifled sigh, of the panting respiration of the Humanity which, for so many centuries, has ascended and pursued what I am still in quest of. God ever conceals himself; but this solitary sigh through all the ages is my very soul—that which has made me immortal.

How many pathetic things there are, besides, in the obscure past!—and living too! In my recollections of yesterday, of that lonely infancy which contains an infinity, it seems to me that I re-discover them. Intermittent flashes, partial dreams, mirages of the all-powerful imagination; beautiful mirages which held me enchained already as by a spell, with eyes directed towards that

heaven I could not then comprehend. Infancy is the divine hour. Not only is the vision obscure of that which comes in later life, but also the germ of what must enlighten, and support, and strengthen, and console me on the difficult acclivity which all of us must climb.

And now that I have entered into the light, I would fain lose none of these shadows of the Past. They are the living roots and fibres of the heart. To pluck them from me would be to pluck away life itself.

Why should we despise that man-child who was, so to speak, our very selves, and who, at first, seems to have been lost in Nature? Poor timid bird, having but the leaf of the woods for shelter, how would it be if he were suddenly taken away from his mighty mother? On the contrary, he would give himself up to her arms, would not distinguish himself from her. It must have been so, and it would have been a pity had it been otherwise.

While trembling under the influence of the storm, and casting himself before it with his face against the earth, he would humanize it, nevertheless; would inspire the black clouds with a human soul analogous to his own—a god like unto himself. Thenceforth this god understood his language; he might be bent, conquered, and appeased by his words. This was the victorious ray which penetrated into the gloomy night. Prayer is a power. Who can resist it? Heaven and Earth are no longer strangers. The dialogue, at first, descends from on high with crushing force; but more and more the powers above are softened, and more and more they lower the barrier between themselves and man. The gods become more human, and man, less the slave of nature, feels something of the god within himself. Out of the rude envelope in which, at first, he was imprisoned and suffocated, appears the soul, the beauty of the human personality.

The profound and predominating legend of the Middle Ages,—a legend constantly recurring under a hundred different forms and in a hundred tales, which still, at the end of a thousand years, are fresh,

is this disentanglement of the soul. It is the history of the poor beast who, spell-bound for a lengthened period, dragged under a foreign disguise the inner freedom of the mind. Alas! it is sometimes ugliness; like a worthless ass's skin. Sometimes it is weakness; a little bird which a wire captures, and which one may easily kill.

Or it is in a tree, which we may cruelly cleave, and strip, and fell, without knowing, perhaps, that a poor man may have hidden there his heart.

Mine feels itself completely oppressed. But the gods are compassionate. Some genius, or some fairy, will accomplish its deliverance. Out of the ugly skin shall issue a fair young maid; out of the tree, a tender child, beautiful as day; out of the feeble bird, a soul delicate and sublime; a song for ever repeated,—the divine melody of the Blue Bird.

The beautiful legend of the living Tree was universal, west, east, north, and south; that of the Forest belongs only to Europe. It comes from the great North, from the Scandinavian wilds, where it enjoyed its youthful potency and sublime originality. It is there the dread spirit awakens, and especially in the stormy night of spring; and the thawed trees crack; and the rocks and rivers thunder. In the morning one goes forth and gazes around. The great storm-wind which has passed by in its terrible might has violently aroused the world from its torpor, and, moreover, has accomplished a grand miracle: it has made the Spring.

It is not without reason that, in numerous Sagas, we are assured that above all these awful sounds rises, nevertheless, a divine and magnificent song; that of the eternal new birth (resurrection or renaissance).

We hear it—that voice of deliverance—in the Alps, when the south wind, the Fœhn, blows violently and formidably in the spring, falling full and direct on the glaciers and the valleys, melting everything, centupling the torrents, invading and penetrating everywhere. The châlets crack, the sleeping firs tremble and revive, being conscious of the passing Spirit. The fires are extinguished, for one thinks one

feels the flame; a flame of life which will everywhere cover the mountains with greenness.

In France and in Germany, the forest, when a storm rages, is haunted, traversed, curbed, and panic-stricken by the spirit-hunters. In Brittany and Wales, it is Arthur with all his warriors. In France, the Great Hunter convulses and terrifies Fontainebleau and all the northern woods. In Germany, it is the Wild Huntsman on his black horse.—Do not look at him, poor woodsman! Down with your face on the earth, and let him pass. Woe to the man who shall be swept off in his train!

This is the legend of the temptation of the Hunter, who, that he may always be successful, invokes the mysterious Spirit.

It is this temptation, the apparent struggle of Man and Nature, that a fine genius, Weber, full of antique songs and of the pure German soul, has so powerfully represented in his "Der Freischutz." In the age of the great instrumentalists, in the midst of the well-known powers of their harmony, he addressed himself to the primitive instrument, so vibratory, so potent over the heart,—the human voice. For its influence is the victory of Humanity over the savage element, the spirit of temptation.

The storm mutters, the wind roars, the earth trembles. It seems as if nothing could be heard. But, nevertheless, a weak voice rises, and dominates over the terrific concert,—the distinct and timid voice of a simple woman. She is alone, and a suppliant. Her terror-trembling voice is the most touching prayer. It is invincible, and nothing can silence it. It rises towards Him whom no eye can see, but whom she feels to be far above the storm. The thunder peals in vain; the voice hovers on high, and but for the tears that mingle with it, you would think it the voice of Heaven.

Nature, overwhelming in its grand crises, and terrible to human weakness,—such is the legend of Wötan, the impetuous spirit which renews the forest verdure.

Yet she is not the less a mother, a nurse, and an asylum for the

unfortunate. Against the injustice of man she is the refuge of the weak. She welcomes them, and stretches out to them her arms.

In the whole mediæval world, I know of nothing more beautiful than these higher legends, wherein the social victim has faith in Nature. This faith she demands from the common people, the animal, the tree. Against the tyrannies of the human city, she invokes the protection of the City of God.

I love exceedingly the ballad-story of gallant Robin Hood, who, against the unrighteous Conquest, the Norman usurpation, took refuge in the Forest. He is the old, true lord of the soil, whom we call the Bandit; with whom, however, are now associated the Right and the Law.—There is something singularly fine in his joyous temperament. He is gay, because he feels himself strong. The green foliage under which he lives is very discreet, envelops him at need, and protects him against my lord the Baron, or the Sheriff, if he passes by. The trees have a secret understanding with him. For him the birds sing songs. All the inhabitants of the forest love him. Wood-cutters, charcoal-burners, all the good people are on his side, for they see in him the oppressed, and the redresser of their wrongs.

One day this admirable robber meets with a woman weeping.—"What ails thee? Has any one done thee injury?"—"Alas, it is far worse! My three sons have been carried off, and will be hung to-morrow."

Robin Hood pursues his way. He meets with a beggar, and they exchange clothes. Disguised, he enters the city, and goes straight to the "dry tree,"—the gibbet. It was then the custom, instead of keep-

ing a paid executioner, that any poor man for a sum of money should carry out the law's decree. The bargain is concluded. Robin Hood accepts his wages blithely. "But," says he, "that the souls of these poor devils may be dismissed the more gaily, I will sound my horn." He sounds, and an unknown populace seems to have issued from the earth. It is Robin Hood's men come from his wood, from his human forest; and the aged mother takes back her sons.

This legend was sung four hundred years ago. The common people doted on their Robin Hood, and would sing of him still. But Robin Hood has departed, and in his place we have a mariner, a traveller, a navigator. Yonder, on that desolate island of the Southern main, is it he whom I behold, or his descendant, Robinson Crusoe?

Still more beautiful are the legends which haunt our immense Forest of the Ardennes. How many touching tales might those oaks relate! Their bark alone is hard, and they themselves have wept.

The most pathetic of all their stories is that of Geneviève of Brabant. Neither the wives of Blue Beard, seven times beheaded, nor the humble and patient Griselda, have so moved every heart.

Who does not know the sweet woman of the Low Countries, the fair, good Fleming? She married a harsh lord, a Paladin of the Rhine, who was for ever at war. While he is away with Charles Martel, fighting against the Saracens, his poor wife is delivered of a child, and the traitor Golo, the perfidious servant who has failed in his attempts to seduce her, makes her husband believe the child is not his own. "Kill both mother and child!" shouts the tyrant. Golo, afraid of vengeance if he should murder a king's son, carries her to the most deserted regions of the great forest, where he feels assured she will perish of hunger.

But poor as may be our dreary Northern Nature, she proves a mother to the innocent. The elements (such was the belief of the time) are so many infallible judges, which would repulse the guilty. The forest feels that she is pure, receives her with a kindly welcome,

and opens wide to her its recesses. The trees concealed her, and nourished her with their tiny berries. A hind inhabiting the same cave with her fawn, which she is suckling, agreed to a division of her milk, as if she had had two young ones. A charming yet a pitiful idyll, which lasted for five years.

The cruel husband had returned to his castle, and not without regretting his rash judgment. In gloom and melancholy he traversed the forests, hunting all day long as a distraction from his grief. One day he pursued a hind, which fled to her retreat. A suppliant voice issuing from it exclaimed, "Have mercy on her, spare her!" His heart trembled. "Who art thou, hidden spirit?" he said; "art thou of Christ?"—"I am a Christian, and a woman. But, my lord, I may not see you. In five years my clothes have worn to shreds, for I have been five years in this wilderness. Yonder is my son—the true son—" She said no more. Her husband flung himself into her arms. But the poor creature was so weak, that a litter had to be made to convey her to the castle. And all men wept, and praised God.

Happy, triumphant, adored, she lived for many years, quitting earth only to ascend to heaven. The forest was consecrated. The cave converted into a chapel. But what about the hind? Did she follow her friend to the castle? Did she remain in the forest? Why has not the legend told us what became of the hind?

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE KINGDOM OF THE WOLF.

UNDER the deep gloom of the forests of Gaul and Germania, of which Lucan speaks, there still wandered, at his epoch, the creatures of an earlier age,—the auroch, the eland, and the bison. Three herbivores were they, preserving the sad and dreary visage natural to all creatures which do not see the light.

The eland, in his marshes, much fonder of swimming than of walking, allowed the livid waters to support his head, with its burden of overwhelming antlers. Born on the threshold of an undefined world, between earth and water, he apparently foresaw that would not long endure, that his life here below would be no more than a passage.

Close beside him, on the dank moist lea, which was but yesterday a swamp, the savage-fronted auroch, and the black bison with his black mane, and eyes always veiled, carried low their heads: gloomy spirits, they seemed to hear the spirits of the earth.

They have yielded ground before Man and Light. The eland has

plunged into his marsh, and lies there buried. The bison has fled afar into the Northern night. The auroch alone has remained to us, and in the course of time has become the patient worker of the furrow.

The forest, cleared and opened up, now belongs to the peaceful; to the noble tribe of stags, to the mild-mannered family of the roebucks. The brown, hairy, woolly bear, more partial to the cavern, also frequents it at times, but not as a tyrant. Was he *ever* cruel? One knows not to what excesses hunger may lead him. Except in times of wretchedness and want, the bear is rather frugal. He adores night, and slumbers through the winter. He resembles a son of the North, a Lapp, in his coat of fur.

He who dominates over everything, who watches everything, equilibrizes everything—both death and life—is that tawny animal, with yellow eyes, reputed to be neither more nor less than a dog of some strong breed. He possesses nothing of the majesty of the lion, who has really a countenance; nothing of the *vis* of the tiger, of the terrible workings of his flat ferocious physiognomy. However it may be, he cannot assume the tragic mask of the felidæ. Savage? yes! But tragic? no!

Something of the shepherd's dog, rugged and biting; something of the furtive countenance of the fox. The ears erect; the eyes oblique, without fire by day, but glowing in the night; and a certain air of cunning about the profile. The whelp in its innocence resembles a shrewd young dog, always on the watch. As, for example, in the well-open jaws, which bite and snap, and do not readily let go their hold.

The wolf is a stout pedestrian. Nothing wearies the vigour of his hamstring of steel. He sets out at dusk, and the dawn sees him fully thirty leagues from his lair. Undoubtedly, hunger has forced him to make these long journeys; but for mere health's sake he is partial to the exercise which whets one's appetite and promotes the suppleness of one's limbs. His hunger is proverbial.

We know not how it is that not the less he can bear a long period of fasting, and live for several days without food. But he does not pass them without *drink*. Thirst devours him. His burning nature

transforms him into an inner flame, greedy of refreshment. He burns with the heat of passion, and so, in mid-winter, he traverses a river, and incrusts himself in icicles, and afterwards lies down to rest, apparently without suffering. His is the robust temperament of one who bears indifferently both good and evil fortune; who works by night; in all weathers, in rain, and wind, and snow; always on the prowl, and always famished. He does not walk, he runs; and with a quick, light gait, which scarcely seems to touch the earth. Yet he never expends all his strength. This is apparent in the chase, when, without exhausting himself, he can put a whole country between him and his hunters.

In the evening he makes you take up your temporary abode in an open country, under a starry heaven. At daybreak you renew the pursuit, and rely upon the *hallali*. But this will be for to-morrow; and to-morrow it will be for the day after. Observe that each day you take a fresh pack of hounds. And mark, the wolf shows no deference to the rank of his hunters. The Grand Dauphin, starting from Fontainebleau in chase of an old wolf, followed him as far as Rennes. It took four days to capture him; and then he was overcome by famine rather than by fatigue.

One secret of the wolf's strength is, that he is bound by no ties of family. He is a husband but for a moment, and never a father. The she-wolf alone has the bringing-up of her whelps; providing them with food, and defending them against attacks, without any care for her own life. Spied out by the woodman, or by the lonely shepherd who protects his flock, she is often surprised, and falls a victim to her passionate tenderness; while Mr. Wolf in his gaiety of heart roams hither and thither, and abandons the country on the slightest alarm, without bestowing a thought on his offspring. Surely Nature watches over him for the preservation of his race.—Several whelps—sometimes as many as nine—are born at a birth.

The great function of the wolf during his prolonged reign was not only to regulate the number of living animals, but to insure the public salubrity and prevent epidemics by providing the dead with a burial-place.

He knows very well what men can effect when they combine, for no single wolf is equal to a pack of wolves.

Throughout the Middle Ages, and even later—in the splendid days of the Renaissance—he never remained long in any single district. Whether in one country or another, he always scented a battle-field, and started off with a pack of his congeners to offer his services. Weary of his deserts, he followed in the track of armies; followed them as the sharks follow a fleet of men-of-war. For the rest, he was without prejudices. In England, like a good Saxon, he crunched the bones of the Normans; in France, when the English invaded it, he ate with a good appetite the English. In those pitiless times the dead peasant or the serf was left on the battle-field, in vain awaiting the gift of a little earth. The wolves would not permit it; and, if necessary, would travel fifty leagues to the spot. All night they would toil. At daybreak there was nothing to be seen: the honest ghouls, without any demand for wages, had returned to their woods.

Let us be just, and admit that so long as man finds a pleasure in killing his like, the wolves, in very truth, are playing a noble part. History registers nothing which blackens their memory: The pirates after Charlemagne, and, next, the barons in their feudal quarrels, set them a very bad example, and overthrew the principles which had kept them reverent in the presence of man. What shall we say of the Hundred Years' War, in which the European sovereigns endeavoured to rob one another of their crowns, and the barons to capture each other's castle?—The reign of the wolf, much enfeebled by the prolonged peace of St. Louis, enjoyed a new lease of prosperity; for man's miseries are the wolf's opportunities. But is he really guilty of having selected us as his favourite dish? To-day it is his greatest crime. We do not approve of his preferring us to the tender little lamb, for which, somewhat too hypocritically, we shed our tears. Why should we supply him with such ample banquets? I reckon that for four centuries he has lived upon man. Surely even a far shorter time would have sufficed to form his taste and develop his delicate palate.

Naturally he was more rustic. His customary food was the sheep

and the ass; and among winged animals he particularly fancied geese. He was wont to pay frequent visits to the farmers' wives: if he found them alone with their children, he assumed a certain *bonhomie*, halted in the court-yard, took a bath in the pond, gambolled about until he had dried himself, and turned peacefully homeward.

We have spoiled his habits: we have taught him that there was something more delicate than woolly animals, and he has profited by the knowledge. And now he has grown a complete epicure, and capable of distinguishing that in humanity all is not of the same value. Man at first seemed good to him, and upon man he lived. But when he had tasted woman! I dare not say it: he found something better still—preferring the child to either man or woman. The whole household was his, it seems, at those epochs of misery which followed the civil wars, the religious wars, and the war of the Fronde. Even under Louis XV. France did not gain any relief: the wolves still remained masters.

War *en règle*, however, had already been declared against them. The *battues* of the Middle Ages had been swept away, and the snares and inclosures, at which the wolf merely laughed. Treatises upon hunting had erected *la louveterie* (the wolf-chase) into a special art. Races of swift dogs, horses, and even of men, had been created for the purpose of hunting down their foe. A numerous train was required; an exceptional master-huntsman, patient as well as tenacious, well acquainted with the habits and stratagems of the wolf; and, before and above all, a philosopher, since "between a wolf seen and a wolf caught there is a world of difference." But these very difficulties excited and piqued his honour.

From the days of Henri Quatre it became a royal pastime. We have already seen to what a distance from Fontainebleau the Grand Dauphin suffered himself to be enticed in pursuit of an old wolf. Very different was the famous hunt of the beast of the Gévaudan, which from the Lozère carried war into Rouerque and Auvergne. At first certain processes were adopted against him: the bishop formally cursed him, ordained public prayers and the exhibition of the Host. But the wolf was not moved: he had to avenge the death of his

brothers. Then our ancestors changed their tactics. They started in pursuit of him the *ban* and the *arrière-ban*—some twenty thousand hunters. Louis XV. sent his pack of hounds—and more, a huntsman who had been in at the death of a thousand wolves. Overcome by numbers, he died the death of the brave.

His reign is at an end. He is now a dispossessed seigneur, leading a Bohemian life—a life of hazards, shifting his camp every night, and sleeping wherever he can: a miserable condition, which keeps him lean and rough, with hollow flanks, and always hungry. One seldom

hears of him except in the depths of winter, when horrible hunger follows close upon his heels, and he loses all thought and prudence. Woe, then, to the undefended sheepfold! He breaks into it, filled with that wild intoxication which long fasting and long expectation excites. Everything is adventured. He strikes and annihilates the flock for the mere sake of killing: it is the intoxication of death.

This cruel animal, this detested robber, is nevertheless the brother

of the dog: solitude alone has changed his nature. And even as he is, how many features of resemblance he exhibits! He has the same predatory instincts—the same nervous sensations—the same nocturnal melancholy, wherein the dog, like the wolf, howls and weeps, and lugubriously drawls out his lamentations.

Both wail and shriek when they hear music.

A charcoal-burner of the Forest of Lyons had no other amusement in the evening than to play the flageolet near his hut. "He whistled there with all his might—a musician, like a true Norman as he was. Immediately the wolves began to howl, and to approach nearer and nearer in the thickets which encircled the little cabin. Nor did they cease so long as the charcoal-burner continued to pipe."

If the wolf had not fallen into so wretched a condition, which keeps him with bristling hair and open—may we not say bloody—jaw, I do not know if he would alarm us more at the first glance than the shepherd's dog in his shaggy coat. I was not in the least afraid when, in my childhood, I witnessed the arrival in my father's country-house of a hungry guest, who quietly made his way in-doors, thinking he might find a home among us. He was of a colour rare among dogs—nankeen all over—with long tufted bristles, which furnished a kind of collar. His ears stood erect, as if always listening keenly; and his covered, oblique eyes had not the *moist velvetiness* of other dogs. He had none of their amiable and somewhat vulgar familiarity. He was grave, self-possessed, and full of reserve. His muzzle was pointed, his sides shrunken. We said, "He is a wolf!"

"Ah, well," exclaimed my father, "even if he should be a wolf!—God made the wolves." He had no certificate of his origin, but it was clear he had led a savage life. He had the look of one who has faced and passed through many terrible adventures. The children would fain have made a companion of him, and joined him in their escapades: but he never seemed to care about them; on the contrary, was apparently anxious to avoid the noisy little troop. His sole attachment was to my father, who walked dreamily up and down the avenues of his garden. He followed him without any demonstrations, without any summons, without any joyous wagging of the tail; but occasionally he

would rest against him in a completely solitary movement. His eyes very rarely sought ours, and when they did, remained more savage than gentle, and seemed to be clouded by uneasy recollections.

Some charcoal-burners, coming from the Forest of the Gresigne, recognized him as a she-wolf's cub. Everything was then explained; both his irascible humour and his dangerous outbreaks against persons whom he did not know. The children (childhood is pitiless!), being unable to have him as a companion, devised a hundred tricks against him. His grimaces and growlings amused them. One day he escaped, and returned to his forest; but at the end of a couple of weeks he came back again, carrying his posts and chains, which he placed before my father, who offered no opposition, simply saying, "I will take care of you, poor wolf!"

He remained always apart, taciturn and melancholy: he saw clearly that he was not loved. The savage spirit of his mother seemed incessantly contending with the nature of the dog, which sought to draw nearer to man, and secure his friendship. He laid himself down under the table; did not sleep; looking about unquietly if my father happened to be absent.

As for myself, having seen him occasionally in his terrible and sudden outbursts of wrath, I kept myself at a distance, and never ventured upon playing him any tricks. This prudence proved advantageous to me in the long run. I saw him especially on the too frequent occasions when my poor father was confined to his bed. Tombo, having no longer upon him the protecting glance of his master, experienced visible suffering. He betrayed it by the dumb eloquence of his attitude: he was now dull, now restless, as if lost in the void. We perceived that his reserved nature—all the more vehement because reserved—had devoted itself entirely to one individual, and that, when this friendship failed him, he knew not how to recover himself.

He was evidently ill; and even I at these moments felt that I too loved him. If I found him concealed in the corner of a cellar, I did not shrink away from him, notwithstanding the anxiety with which his yellow eyes, glaring in the twilight, inspired me.

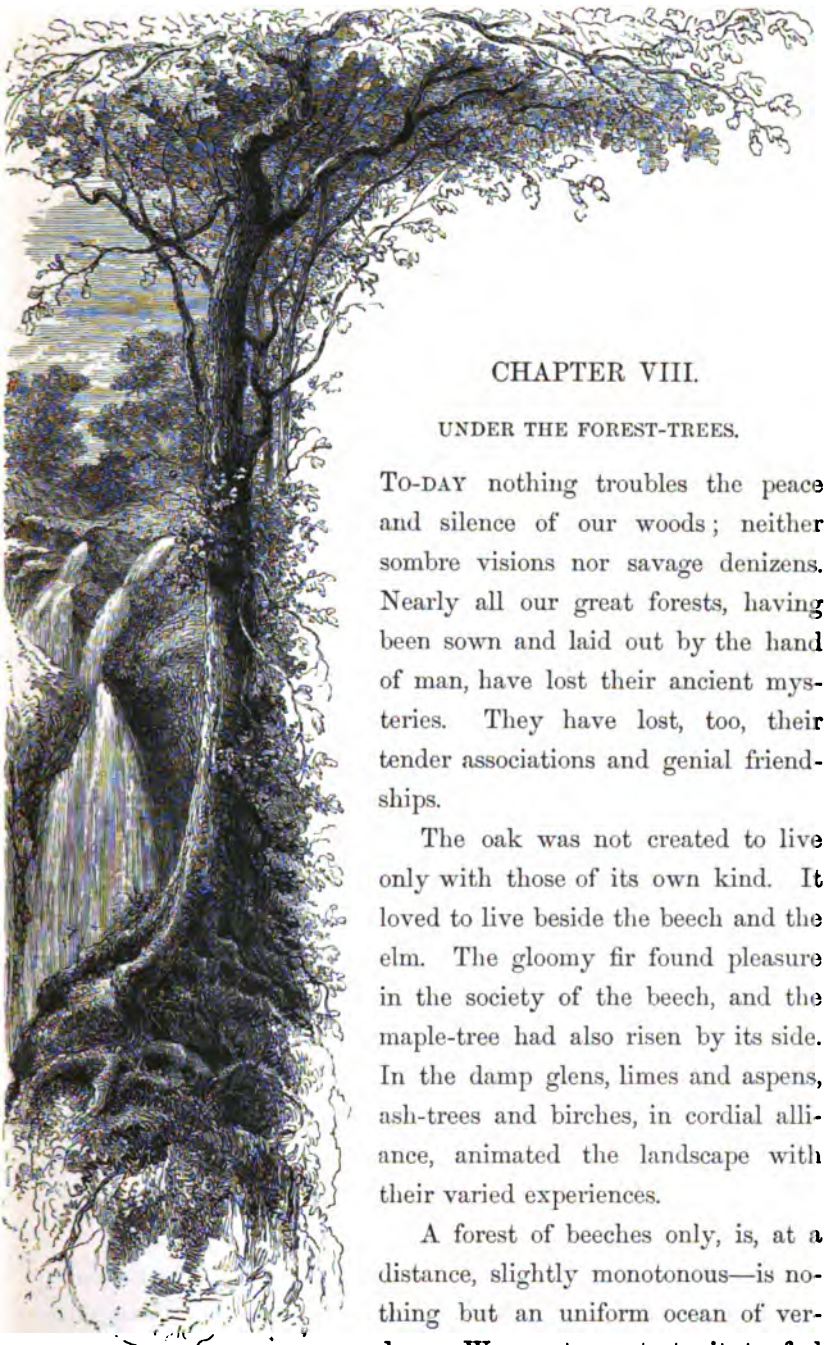
As the years passed by he was devoured with sorrow. He grew

extremely lean, and, like all animals when in pain, took refuge in solitude. In the cellar he found his best asylum,* for it gave him shade, silence, and a profound peace. I often resorted thither to play with my doll. I thought I was alone with it; but a long-drawn sigh escaped beside me: Tombo had either preceded or followed me.

It was a curious spectacle. On the top of the stairs, and a little in the light, Moquo, our timid, nervous cat, half-willing half-unwilling to descend, stationed herself, finding it pleasant to be partly in society; below, the dog-wolf, whom suffering had humanized; on my knees, Margarido. We were four. I would fain have held Moquo in my arms, and no longer fearing Tombo, have brought him to my feet.

The poor savage came there of his own accord when he felt himself near his end. Gradually he had approached towards me; but on his last day I fancied that he waited until I was beside him to die. Gathering up his energy a little, he dragged himself painfully along, rested his head upon my feet and on the hem of my dress: his eyes, which he had fixed upon me, drew dim and dull, and he expired.

* [For a description of this retreat, see Madame Michelet's "Mémoires d'un Enfant."]



## CHAPTER VIII.

### UNDER THE FOREST-TREES.

To-day nothing troubles the peace and silence of our woods; neither sombre visions nor savage denizens. Nearly all our great forests, having been sown and laid out by the hand of man, have lost their ancient mysteries. They have lost, too, their tender associations and genial friendships.

The oak was not created to live only with those of its own kind. It loved to live beside the beech and the elm. The gloomy fir found pleasure in the society of the beech, and the maple-tree had also risen by its side. In the damp glens, limes and aspens, ash-trees and birches, in cordial alliance, animated the landscape with their varied experiences.

A forest of beeches only, is, at a distance, slightly monotonous—is nothing but an uniform ocean of verdure. We must penetrate it to feel

its true grandeur, when, rearing aloft its noble columns, and thickening its roof of foliage, it becomes a church — a church lofty, and deep, and completely hushed by its shadows. God reigns there in the silence.

The old Druid oak has preserved the ancient low-roofed temple, resting upon heavy pillars, all loaded with curious hieroglyphs.

But in order that the beech may rear aloft its Gothic church, and the oak sink deeply the crypts of its temple, the reverence of man is indispensable. Time alone can consecrate the works of Nature, and invest them in their real grandeur.

The hand of man has sown, but the tree has been fashioned after the image of its mother, Nature. Under the burning zones, where she warms and stimulates—dishevelled, swollen with juices, calling to its aid the succour of the parasitical fungus, its beneficent blood-letter —the tree appears to be a Proteus, always ready to change its form.

Truly it is the same mighty Forest, all covered with bloom; but what has become of the being of yesterday? The life-flush reddens and pales in the same second. The soul of the earth has so little fear of growing old! But it is in vain it hastens, in its rapid interchange. From its bosom incessantly escapes an indefinable morbid sigh, which, respired and wrought by itself under the burning sun, creates the terrible chemistry, the formidable poisons, which strike you dead at once. There every unknown tree is a gloomy enigma. Art thou life? or art thou death?

In our European woods there is nothing of this kind. If the wind which traverses the forest has, in the first place, crawled over feverish marshes, it receives their breath, and feeds it, and re-creates a pure atmospheric current; and this it does without manufacturing any poisons.

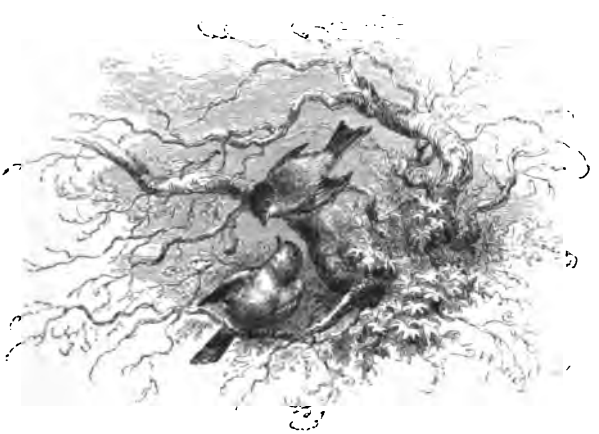
In our temperate climes the dream of the tree is to become a strong oak, or a great beech, and to *endure*. Our forest possesses nothing of the phantasmagoria of the Tropics; but it has the rhythm,

the graduated equilibrium of the seasons. The cycle of the year opens for it, and closes, with a slow, harmonious progress, which is quite a poem. And we do not escape from these harmonies. It seems that our life mingles with them; that our soul is made like the forest, faithful and changing. Were our forests always the same, always green and blossomy, we should beg them to have pity on us. If their rhythm continuously stretched out in long periods of youth and decay, we should see in them much too plainly the image of our own destiny.—But this charming renewal every spring deceives us as to ourselves. We think ourselves every year as young as the oak which is in leaf, and set out again with it.

At the moment when we are barely free of the shadow-burdened winter, the returning sun is very good. In itself alone is a festival. We contemplate it, we hail it, and we say of it what was said by the seaman who, in the Polar regions, had not seen it for six months,—

"Excellent creation of God!"

We would not lose it again so soon. In our doubtful springs, so marked by indecision, it is delightful that our forest is not in too



great a hurry. A young fresh foliage, which affords a passage to the light, swift-moving shadows, songs of awakening birds—oh, the moment is divine! Heaven, and earth, and the heart of man are in unison.

But Time has passed, and we groan under the summer sun. The earth is wan, and has lost its freshness. We feel in our faces its burning breath. Let us fly from the great plain, the ocean of light—let us fly into the shade of the forest-trees. What happiness to plunge into these dense glooms, to rest one's eyes from the too powerful radiance! It is my lost Eden which I find again. The air is astir, and descends from the trees all pure and fresh. The sun everywhere imparts a new grace to the morning hour. Let us gain, at first, the open glade. For of such are the state-chambers of the forest. From afar the long dim avenues look apparently towards these vistas as they lie bathed in amber radiance. All is young and laughing. The flowers, banished from the austere forest, come hither to hold their little councils, and contemplate the heavens. They bathe in the dew, and mingle together their airy perfumes. Nor do the birds fail to seek these spots, and breathe forth their songs. The heroic chaffinch flings forth again and again his metallic note. The fluttering wren blends his tiny and somewhat melancholy voice, vague as an echo, or as a sigh of the breeze. The warbler, ever partial to the grove, is its young, subdued soul, trembling in its sweetness.—What seductions greet us on the threshold!

The stir and animation of the woods are never found among the great old patriarchal trees. The hermits of the olden time dream there, lost in thought. Songs and flowers love the lighter shades; and mosses and violets, the thick moist recesses; as also, occasionally, the white spiræa a dim and pallid vision.

But on the border of the glade, as at the portico of a temple, we see the twining garlands. Not only the graver ivies, but the beautiful cincture of the semi-lianas, of eglantine, and mulberry, and strawberry. Mixed with these grows the virgin vine. The great bindweed entangles itself everywhere, clinging to the trunks of the trees, and spreading over the golden broom. Waking at early dawn, it opens and reverses its exquisite urns of virgin whiteness; it decorates the threshold of the forest as if for a summer holiday.

Sometimes a little water nestles in a basin, and holds up its mirror

to the sky, reflecting the image of the grand dreamy trees. They do not seem weary of self-contemplation, or of observing in themselves the work of time. A whole world of plants press together on the margin of the stream. Who knows but that these humble plants, small as they are, render some service to yonder good, motionless giants? The wood does not appear so solitary; this pool animates and rejoices it. A huge tree, felled by the woodman, and carpeted all over with beautiful moss, seems to invite other guests. And thither we go, with our thoughts and our dreams, always bearing traces of the obscurity of the night. But lo! they have all taken flight; they have regained the shades.—We go homeward with a heart relieved. We will return thither to-morrow.

The passing days and nights have lain heavily. The sky, which for two weeks did not wear a cloud, has assumed a milky whiteness. The wind is not yet astir. The slanting rays of the sun smite us in the glade.—Let us make our way into the depths of the wood

It is more silent than usual. As we advance, we speak in a hushed tone, almost involuntarily, the voice sinking with the light.

Among the branches the birds are whispering rather than calling for their respective mates. Sometimes a mournful note escapes, as from a suffering heart. It is the cry of the bullfinch, who has lost his spouse.

The light more and more assumes a mysterious emerald hue. Oaks and beeches mingle among the firs. The forest, as in days of old, has resumed its mysteries. The air sleeps, oppressed by the silence. Yet, hark! It is not the breeze. A light murmur, vague at first, but deeper now, circulates like a breath of unseen souls. Do not the immovable trees seem to grow animated! Is this a dream—a vision? Do my eyes see clearly? I could almost affirm that I see the bark of yonder oak moving. It is not a shudder which passes into its furrows, but, as it were, the play of a spirit. You would think that bark was going to speak, to shape itself into movable letters, and relate to me its Story of an Oak.

Shadows so tender, shadows for me always so human, why do ye overwhelm me? I have come to ask you to relieve me from my weariness, to give me a young, refreshed, re-invigorated soul. And ye leave me my sorrowing heart. I leave you this time without having blessed you!

It seems as if one breathed more freely on the threshold of the wood. One feels while within it the influence of a vague tremor. Under the great trees each trunk appeared like to a fireside radiating its warmth upon me. The dry air fatigued my chest—an air less heavy than insufficient, and much too laggard in its movement. You saw the leaves half dead with languor. And the leaves were right in their warnings; for the air was sickly, without any aspiration after life, or hope of rejuvenating itself. Some violent crisis was needed to render the spark active and prolific.

It is the joy of the forest when the clouds are torn asunder;

and through the rents the thunder-peals escape. It drinks long draughts of vitality. Those elements of the air are, in truth, the same they were before the storm; but then they existed apart, in gloomy separation.

A flash of lightning touches them, and lo! they precipitate themselves headlong, they blend together, and revive expiring Nature. The wood draws up the electricity of earth and heaven, as they seek to be united under its branches. It is the beneficent intermediary which softens and appeases the brawling spirit of the storm.

It has passed, after having poured out its torrents. The forest smokes and steams with them. It is hard at work. Through its

refreshed and expanded foliage it respires strongly, and absorbs all that there is of good in the renewed air.

How everything is changed! How delightful an awakening! I have no longer a desire to seek the solitude. Mental uneasiness and melancholy have vanished with the storm. I feel desirous of companionship. I love to catch the large heavy drops of water which fall quite warm from the branches, and which exhale a light perfume. The air is sonorous, and makes an echo everywhere. Yet, yonder, the sky is still black. It will rain again; but the night will be calm, and sleep will be genial.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE LEAF AND THE LIGHT—THE FALL OF THE LEAVES.

It is the dream of the Forest to mount towards the light, to contemplate the sun, to take from it all that it can give, and to retain that all. The aged and captive oak, fettered in its time-old bark, which has ceased to respire, makes an effort every year, at the awakening of the spring, to emerge from its gloom and display its young verdure under the beams of April. It sends through its leaf a delicate net-work of veins, wherein its life will circulate—that blood of the oak chilled by winter and by years. We have all of us admired the subtle, delicate lace-work of the dead leaf, to which there is nothing comparable even in the human lungs.

And this because the leaf is a far more powerful and admirable laboratory; through which the inert, cold, inorganic thing comes to be released from its protracted captivity. The mineral has waited some

thousands of centuries for the plant, before it could throw off its inertia and spring into motion. It is she who delivers it, who extricates it from its evil enchantment, and has created for it new attractions, friendships, and loves. It rushes headlong into them. Never were hymeneals more spontaneous or more rapid.

She alone can work the miracle, and awaken the dead bones, the *débris* of another age. Let the leaves live, and the world will never be old: I see it in its eternal youth, clad in the emerald spring.

Among all colours is not this the most harmonious? It is the medium colour, which occupies the centre in the rays of the prism, and seems to preserve an equilibrium between the extreme colours. It is a completely human tint, which rests the eye, induces the soul to meditate, and encourages the toil of thought. How vast would have been the difference if these forests and meadows had adopted yellow or red, or the mournful violet, or the blue of heaven? Man would have closed his eyes, preferring to see nothing. The forests have attired themselves in green for their own sake, and not to please us; but could the prudent plant which came also to nourish us have done better by thinking of it?

The leaf loves the heat, but still more fondly the light. In winter —in January—when it returns to us, the sleeping plants become conscious of its summons, and turn towards it, as if to lose nothing of its chilly ray. A dracæna which I keep in my dining-room, placed before a mirror, has bent itself, and made an acute angle with its stem, as if it would penetrate the mirror with its extremity and its young leaves. It has not thought of leaning towards the window, which reflects less vividly the outer beam.

All plants live by light, and die in darkness. But happily for the earth, all do not wish to see it under the same degree of lustre. Of this we are warned by the different bearing of vegetables. It is, in part, the secret of their gracefulness, their elegance, or their austerity.

Our great trees—the oak, and elm, and yew, the beech, and the chestnut—display on their rigid branches a vesture of nearly motion-

less but lustrous leaves. From morning to evening the sun glasses himself in them. They drink, and are intoxicated with, his rays.

One would say, on the other hand, that the poplar, the aspen, the birch, and many others, find it necessary to escape, and even to defend themselves, from such splendour. The leaves incessantly quiver at the tip of their long pendent sprays; and you may fancy you hear the silvery murmur of the brook rippling over the pebbles. The birch, which expands itself in long draperies, visibly offers up itself to the light, to that oblique northern light which daily kisses the sands where it loves to live, and so continually warms them.

To retain its freshness, a soul is infused into its branches. Even when not, a breath of air is astir, one hears the murmur of its leaves, and sees them floating, all softly and vaguely, like silvery flakes.

The willow, inclining towards the water, has bent over itself its light-green tresses. In a dry soil, its thin leaf, reddened and burned, as if passed through fire, would have quickly disappeared. The sun here is no longer an

enemy. Let him drink; the weeping willow has all the pool to quench its thirst.

The different green hues of the leaves betray also their impulse towards the light, or their shrinking from it. The sombre foliages avoid the excess of radiance, the pointed darts of the sun. They love the calm and peaceful day, they seek the shady coverts and the recesses of the mountains where the shadows lie deep and heavy. All the green trees have assumed a funereal but useful livery. The heroic family of the Conifers, under this dreary uniform, has endured through all the ages of the globe, and lived in epochs even the most distant and the most gloomy.

They alone, with the equisetæ and the ferns, are acquainted with the long history of the earth and the secret of its revolutions.

And even to-day the dreary yew prefers to hide itself in the obscurity of the forests. It cherishes that green, cold, seemingly lifeless light which falls around it from the black firs.

Quite otherwise is it with that young laughing foliage, which rises to the sky like an immense pyramid,—the poplar. It seems always in love with the light—with what it loved in its infancy, the spring-time ray which awakens and sets in motion the swift and airy life—the very spirit of the ether. The tree resembles it, and asks but little, retains but little, from the earth. Its light wood is less desirous of durability than of resuming its upward progress, of re-entering into the great movement of Nature, of becoming anew, like its mother, light and vibration.

Thus: the movement of the leaves, their various verdure, the inflection of the branches, disguise the immobility of the tree, and permit it to fly from and escape—what seems fatal for all—the identity of the same effects of light. When necessary, the leaves dissimulate their favourite colour under another garb.

Near the falls of the Zambezi, where the sun's rays fall vertically, Livingstone saw them clad in every colour,—red, yellow, pomegranate, chestnut, all the metallic tints, and even in black. Elsewhere, he saw some which had preserved their greenness, but remained closed like a book, and never aroused from their sleep so long as the drought endured.

Their destinies, it seems, are unequal. Can Nature, like Man, have its preferences? Let us ask rather of the fir, for whom God made so short a season. To escape, in its deep valley, the fatal mists which arrive there late, and return soon, it will tell you that it must always be on its guard. It must respire freely; and yet if it opens too wide its little mouths, it runs the risk of being interpenetrated with the chilly damp, or of feeling too keenly the bite of the bitter frost.

Poor little leaf—a needle merely—how hard must be thy life, even in the finest days!

By its side, the beech, all thickly covered with shining leaves, enjoys, assuredly, a better fate. Yes, in April, and in summer; but there comes in September a very severe night, and on the morrow the mountain will be all red. The fir will be content to tint somewhat darker still its foliage, already dark. And if the variations of temperature be not too cruel, the same needle-like leaf will endure for six, for seven, or even a dozen years. The sum of life will thus, then, have been equal. Active and absorbent, it will be rapid. Intensity is the equivalent of duration.

In the dry, burning summers, almost without nights, the leaf, panting, as it were, in the furnace, knows not any repose. It is a continual and rapid play of aspiration and respiration; a too powerful sun excites it. Sometimes, as early as July, it turns yellow, and does not wait for the autumn. In cooler localities, where it works less rapidly, it will travel more slowly towards the goal; but it *will* arrive there. September is ended, the nights lengthen, the wearied trees grow dreamy, the leaf sinks with fatigue. If the light did but succour it still! But the light itself has grown weaker. The dews fall abundantly, and in the morning the sun no longer cares to drink them up.

It looks towards other horizons, and is already far away; it is, as it were, an evening sun. Its long oblique rays are protruded through the black trunks, and create under the woods some luminous and still genial tracks of light. But it is no longer the valiant sun which made the forest steam, plunged from on high into the depth of the foliage, and every day stimulated it with its glance

The leaf, feeling that its sentence has been pronounced, submits to fate; but, before dying, bequeathes to the tree all that it contains of light, and transmits into the bourgeon, which slumbers close at hand, its vital, life-giving essence. Then it isolates itself from the community, puts between it and the enduring branch a thin layer of cork which neither the air nor the damp can penetrate. Alone, it abandons itself to the rain, the winds, the frost, and the grave.

When young and still full of vigour, it brought into subjection the elements of the air, made its choice among them, drank delightedly of the carbonic acid gas which would be *our* death, and exhaled the oxygen which makes our life. But now that it has grown weak, and the sun sinks, the element it exiled returns and avenges itself. Night and day it enters into the leaf, establishes itself therein as a master, and labours after its fashion. The leaf makes an effort to throw it off, to banish it again. But vainly: its respiration is no longer free enough; it is too sorely wounded.

Then, by degrees, the landscape grows illuminated. Above the forests, upon the hills, and on the flanks of the mountains, the warm gleams are already playing. It seems as if a conflagration had been kindled—the shifting reflections of a firmament on fire. The light abandons *us*, and we are tempted to think that it wishes to rest in the leaf, and to concentrate within its fibres all its rays.

Summer, comparatively, was monotonous; wore always the same verdure. Now, the earth is a fairy spectacle. At the bottom of the damp valley, where the trees huddle close together, every tone of colour is intermingled, pale golden tints with glowing or slightly burnished golds. Every leaf is gilded. The vivacity of the beech

contrasting with the gloom of the fir; lower down, the rusty hues of the oaks; and lower still, on the sides of the steep ravines, the drooping and fallen brambles, eglantines, and wild-vines, blend their glowing reds with the wan yellow of the hop-plant. Is it not a festival, the festival of life?

November approaches—the festival of the dead. The leaf departs, all prepared for its suffering and its approaching end. The sun casts a last look on the poor dying creature, and whispers—Hope! "Though the autumnal winds may have stripped the forest, are the trees to abandon hope?"

"I am not a powerful tree which lives a thousand summers. When leaves shall grow like myself, and become what once I was, then I shall be no more. O Sun! why dost thou smile upon me again from the bosom of the clouds? Have I not so admired thy splendour that I die of it? But I love thee still! O Light! Take thou my passing life, eternal Star! I bless thee for all the gifts which thou hast given me. I bless the breath of the morning at which I trembled in the summer, the swarm of butterflies which danced around me, the eyes which my tints and hues have rejoiced, the souls which my shadow has rested. Farewell, Light! Breeze of the morning, I say to thee, Adieu!"—(*Rückert.*)

Now, with a tiny sound, they fall one by one: each like a parting soul. But Nature has sometimes her fits of impatience, and would fain finish quickly with that which is no more. It is autumn still, and already, at intervals, the sharp and whistling winter-breeze traverses the heavy air, and fiercely plucks off and sweeps away the foliage of the woods.

But what matters it, O forest, that thy hour advances, when thou art no longer in quest of slumber and repose?

But for me, I cannot lull myself asleep, nor bury myself, like thee, in a dream. I must work and watch. Spare me, at least, the empty shadows, and suffer my gloomy winter to be brightened by a pale ray of light. Yield, O forest, and dissolve thyself!

"Soufflez, ô vents que Dieu sitôt déchaîne!
Feuilles, tombez, laissez-moi voir les cieux."

"Blow, O ye winds, unchained by Power Divine!
And fall, ye leaves, and let me see the heavens."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE WINTER.

Now everything is asleep. The sun rises late, scarcely bestows a glance upon our little world, and wishes us good-evening. He is so far, so very far from us, that upon his course he loses nearly all his light and all his warmth. I can no longer address him as "Father of Life." He is nearly white, and rayless. I have no need to lower my eyelids in his presence. I look upon him as an equal, confront him face to face, and with my eyes wide open.

To speak the truth, he shows himself but little. We are now in December, which has been so happily named the month of sleep. There are no more storms in the air, no more convulsive spasms. The tempests of the equinox are already at a distance; a century separates us from the emotions of the spring.

The trees now permit us to see against the gray-tinted sky what the uniform beauty of the foliage had previously concealed,—the subtle and delicate organization of the branches. They now stand out in

their solitary individuality. The strong rise aloft like masts or in girandoles. Even the winter they supply with a sufficiently grand effect of decoration. But to these strangers—to the superb Indian chestnut, for example—how greatly I prefer the lime and its pliant branches, the elm with its delicate sprays, and the wrinkled austerity of the old oak!

One day, walking to and fro in a beautiful cemetery, I was looking at the trees, and the somewhat meagre branches which they reared above me. "Ye are weary," I said, "poor sleepers! How naturally ye simulate death, and harmonize with the sad tenants of this sad spot!"

During the sleep of the forest, the earth dreams of self-renovation. The air, which freely passes under the despoiled branches of the trees, restores to it in part what it had lost during the long travail of summer. Everything at this moment is of advantage to it. The leaves and mosses which cover it nourish it with their *débris*. It loves the bite of the cold, and the keen frosts. It undergoes, as it were, a profound labour, which mobilizes it, and prepares it for interpenetration by the snows of winter and the rains of spring. Like a good mother, she has kept for it the days of heaviest showers. And we see that it has received its recompense. From the heavens also descends a prolific nourishment—the animated dust of shooting-stars. In the winter-nights, and particularly those of November, we see them darting rapidly towards us, infinite in number: they form, so to speak, a rain of fire.

I adore the light; and yet I have some sympathy with the earth—I am grateful for the dead season. The repose of Nature sets me free. She is strong, and I am weak. I wait until she pauses, to take up the thread of my thought.

If the tree watched during this December night, it would brighten and enkindle itself with the rays which all the summer it has concentrated in its essence. I do what the tree ought to do; I return to the Past, and contemplate it in the light of my recollections. I recover all that it gave me in the way of holidays; warm and living landscapes, evenings dying out softly, and luminous dawns, full of impulse and of

prayer. There is nothing now to distract my attention. My life concentrates itself, like that of the little lamp with which I lighten up my morning work. It is the hour when one resembles the miser, and loves to look upon one's own treasures; it is the hour when nothing is commonplace or moderate, neither our joys nor our pains. Let the rain fall, let the winds groan,—we find it pleasant to bury ourselves in the deepest depths of our inner solitude.

Often, in this month of December, towards Christmas, the thick but silent snow descends, and, descending, silences every sound. Upon the uniform white mantle with which it covers the earth we see people going and coming; but we hear nothing—neither the foot which resounds nor the voice which trembles.

Is it a certain fact that the earth still lives?—and do not these passing and re-passing shadows simulate the play of life? One might think so from the dejection which one's-self experiences. It is at first a vague uneasiness, a painful disquietude. It seems that a painful hand weighs upon and clutches tight our heart. The Swiss, so accustomed to this phenomenon of winter, invariably foretells and suffers from this affliction. He feels from the moment of its approach that a power escapes him which he cannot recover.

At this moment the forest is beautiful to see; but do not go there in the evening by moonlight, or you will return from it with your mind overcome by funereal visions. I remember that in this way I once spent several hours in a large German forest. I thought I was travelling in a vast cemetery; and what appalled me was the saying that the dead awaked and issued from their icy shrouds. They were giants; they reared themselves against heaven, sombre and dishevelled. It seemed, too, that these phantoms menaced the passers-by.

Let us rather walk now by daylight, in any fair and solitary scene.

In 1855, when the winter was of great duration, and very gloomy for all, for us it was full of light; we—my husband and I—were engaged upon "THE BIRD." The snow lay on the ground for several weeks. Our Luxemburg—then not mutilated—was filled with grandeur

and silence. There were but few passers-by. This solitude tried me. I endeavoured to tread down the snow, which did not resist, but yielded under my feet a little. My assiduous companions were the thrushes, and especially the sparrows. They knew me well. Nothing could be prettier than the slight imprints of their little feet. Wings!— they used them in every movement.

It was in this winter-time that I made the acquaintance of the little magician who comes to us from the North, decorated with his imperceptible crown,—the wren. One cannot enjoy a more agreeable surprise. The vivacity of his movements, his rapid flutterings round the old motionless trunks, his little and soft flute-like song, like a spirit's voice, was a protest against the sadness and lethargy of the winter.

Hours too brief—more tranquil in your darkness than the brightest days of summer—I shall ever regret ye!

December, with its mists, was openly and plainly melancholy. January comes to cheer one with a little gaiety. It has the fancies and caprices of spring. It is much too soon, however; and truly it is not blithe at heart. I have no joy as yet in the sun's return. I know very well it is not the orb of day which awakens me; for this morning his rays fell so palely and so coldly on my book and on my hands that you would have thought them made of marble.

More melancholy still is that sun which rises flooded with dense, heavy clouds on the very point of breaking. A wan, sickly day lights up my room. How I hate these false gleams! In spite of myself, I fly in the direction of the shade. And the tree would fly also, if it were not motionless. Let January deceive him with a false April, and his sleep will be no longer a sleep. He will say incessantly, "May I slumber yet awhile, or is it time for me to awake?" But if the upper buds should imprudently emancipate themselves.....!

It freezes! Alas, too hasty lilac bourgeons! The breeze pounces

upon them, and strips them off, all blackened. Better had it been for January to continue the winter glooms, and spare the woods these treacherous appeals when followed by such cruel repulses.

The forest does not dislike the cold; and I can very well imagine that it takes a pleasure in the festal—the magical decoration with which the frost sometimes adorns it. One has gone to one's bed at night, with the air moist and misty, and almost warm; but lo! in the morning we wake up in the midst of an enchanted forest all white with light. The air is keen. If we go out? The earth crackles under our feet. A severe frost has taken place. The dew, which had shone like pearls, has been hardened into diamonds. The heart is blithe, and one feels one's-self full of nerve and will. The animals are seized with a kind of intoxication; the cows as they are led to drink would fain be merry; and the dog visibly laughs. And all this because earth and sky are in accord, and the sun shines upon a world which seems astir. The erect or drooping branches of the trees are converted into lustres and prismatic girandoles. As the sun glances upon them, a spark leaps forth. The birches, which we invariably find in our woods, and which give them a melancholy character, are on this winter day the merriest. Their supple branches, opened in filagrees, expand and rustle. On the dead silvery mantle stars of all colours shoot forth their rays.

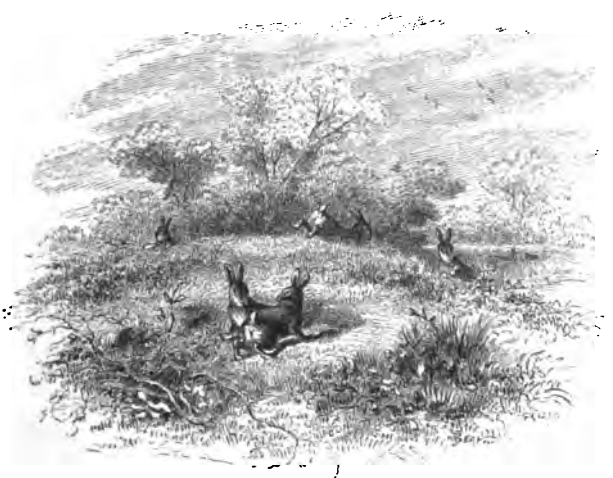
Do not you believe, like the children of the South, that invisible fairies, lighter than the "threads of the Virgin," have followed them, have made their way in among the trees, and lit up the forest with their illumination?

The true enjoyment of winter is, nevertheless, the Fireside. We have worked hard all day at our library-table,—we two, often animated by one and the same thought; yet we have lived almost apart. But now that evening has come we draw nearer to the fire, and seek in the coffer at our side the largest log. The lamp, with its reflector well let down, is set far back at the end of the room. Much blither will be the fire, with its dancing light, which seems in a curious mood

to seek out every little corner. Happy the one who holds the tongs! Is not the other, who looks on, a little jealous? At intervals a blue flame kindles up, and vanishes. It revives, and shades off into a rosy light. Be sure that the log is of beech; no other wood yields this smiling and yet genial radiance. The oak burns with a flame less clear; from yellow, it turns to red. It inspires us with less cheery thoughts.

The cold without makes the fire burn freely. Soon nothing of it remains but the glowing embers, whose tiny jets of flame play about, and flutter, expire, revive, and expire again. The heat is then all complete and more concentrated. But in this semi-twilight we speak less, though we do not as yet dream dreams or see visions. The heart is not only to be found where it throbs; but it is near those beloved friends who have sought like ourselves to make merry in the evening, and who have discovered nothing.

Is it God who makes the earth greedy, and brings gloom to so many hearths?



## CHAPTER XI.

### DISAPPEARANCE OF THE FORESTS.

No! God has not brought darkness to the fireside. Nature, under his eyes, has accomplished the great work designed to preserve it for us.

From the first ages of the world we have seen the fern at work. How came it to act so soon?—to collect, and accumulate, and bury, for the advantage of chillier ages, the treasures of heat which still mounted from below, from the warm bowels of the earth.

But for the fern, this heat would have radiated beyond our atmosphere—would have been lost for us, without hope of return.

When the limit fixed for each generation of the forest arrived, it descended gracefully into its tomb, and another forest rose above it. We think we see this labour reproducing itself still in our own days; in the floating meadows of the marshes of Holland, in the suspended rafts of the Mississippi, in the wandering gardens of Mexico. Grow-

ing heavier than the water, they sink, they disappear, and set about making a new bed.

Close upon the living plant came the herbivore, and added its heat to that which she derived from the sun. The herbivore having come, Man was born, who inherited a threefold heat. In him, so to speak, three suns concentrated their powers. Yet this was not enough: he required a fourth—our domestic fireside—for that season when the great fire of heaven grows somewhat dull.

It is perhaps through this absorption of so many concentrated suns that man has called himself the King of Creation. But he must confess that he is a very chilly king. Even in our own temperate zone he would vegetate unhappily if his fire failed him in the winter. Of all animals, he is the only one who cannot supply himself in this respect without difficulty—who cannot provide himself out of his internal heat with a fire to repel and defy winter.

In the North, towards the Pole, I see truly but a single king—the white bear. He tolerates the Esquimaux, but laughs to see him wrapping himself up in a coat of his own fur, which still is insufficient for him. Both live nearly on the same regimen, and every morning drink some pints of seal-oil. The bear, thus encouraged, devotes the whole day to his occupations, while the Esquimaux hides himself in his snow-hut.

This excessive cold, however, is far preferable to the elevated wind which afflicts the inhabitants of our antipodes; of that desolate region which, in derision apparently, has been named the *Tierra del Fuego*.

There, the sight of humanity is in very truth appalling. Men, women, and children, all most poorly clad in wretched skins, wander shelterless on the margin of a wild sea, near which the dogs are howling. The boisterous gale is always ready to sweep them away in its vortex. With shaggy hair and vacant looks, they seem like apparitions, like fantastic shadows.

The tree supplies one-half of man's warmth and one-half of his

liberty. If the tree failed, what would become of us? Without the fireside, the glowing hearth, which is the capital necessity of our existence—without instruments to assist our activity—we should sink back into a state of barbarism. Man will ever have feet, but never wings: he will remain with face bent towards the earth, without a glance towards the heaven.

It is Work which makes him truly the son of God; but intelligent Work, which neither depresses nor overwhelms our human weakness, and does not keep us stooping over the furrow.

The first step on the path of freedom was the compact of alliance made between ourselves and our inferior brothers, the animals which were all ready to serve us.

The second was the creation of auxiliaries, which, not being like them, feeble creatures and full of pains, might by their powerful action increase our own, and supply us with multiple arms, to lighten and burst asunder the fetters of the mind. But where is the soul of these machines if not in the forests which covered the globe, and whereof in its primeval days were its vast and uniform mantle?

The heat of those times and that of to-day, having once entered into the tree, becomes an active force, and centuples the power of the world. If, through want of foresight, man destroys the forests, this heat which the sun gave to the earth will reäscend towards the upper spaces, and be hopelessly lost.

Our coal-mines cannot last for ever. And the trees which our children will therefore plant will not attain a fitting growth, nor develop into new centres of heat, until centuries have passed by. What then will become of our industries and our acquired progress? Will not humanity *re*descend the slope up which it has with so much difficulty toiled?

For it is not a matter simply concerning the action of the machines which coal sets in motion. In a thousand other things wood is the element of Art, and the primary material of our creations. Take but our railways. In 1854 we (the French) had consumed ten thousand hectares of lofty forest, aged upwards of one hundred and twenty years. On the other hand, before the employment of iron

became general in our houses, the wood used in carpentry and joinery had absorbed a greater quantity than all our forests united.

And how many other uses there are for wood! What would become of our mercantile fleet if timber could not be cheaply obtained?

And furniture, that luxury of the rich household, that moral talisman of the poor, which charms and decorates the mansion and the cottage, and attaches man to his fireside!—I figure to myself the household stripped of all this poesy, empty and cold—I was going to say, without a nest. How great would be the change in our inner life!

The track of man is roughly marked out upon the earth. Wherever he has passed, she lies bare and exposed. The reign of the forest will soon terminate.

Have you sometimes seen a cloud glide over the face of the sun, and spread a shadow on the earth in the twinkling of an eye? Not less rapidly has the harsh light sprung up in the track of the iron, of the axe. The arm of man has been pitiless. In the place of the forest he has created the desert. The tree having fallen, the spring has dried up, and with it earth's fertility.

I do not dare to survey our earth, and number its ruins. In the very countries whence come so many stores of exuberant forests, they are daily being thinned. In Asia, in Hindustan, at that focus of life where everything concentrates to evoke the plant, earth exhibits but an image of hoar antiquity. The forests so frequently destroyed—a soil impoverished and exhausted by successive crops, now refuses to produce. The gay jungles, spreading over the pestilential marshes, usurp the place of the forests. The great nomadic tribes carry conflagration afar, disdaining to plant because their fathers did not do so. Even the tiller of the ground grows a savage, and would destroy everything, if the State did not attempt to protect at least the precious essences.

Without speaking of the desert Steppes, which cover so great a portion of Central Asia, in travelling westward we find, in the direction of desolate Arabia, Syria melancholy and despoiled, and her Jordan

dried up, where the thistles grow erect, where the reeds, with their siliceous foliage, in the absence of water, mimic its sweet sounds. Even the Libanus is depopulated. Its long boasted groves of cedar, which tempted the pride of a great king—where shall we go for them to-day?

South America, nearly desolate, preserves the impenetrable forests of the Madeira, the Amazons, and the Orinoco. But in the heart of Brazil, what an image is presented to us of misery and arid ruin! The miner, in his fierce lust of gold, has waged so wild a war against Nature that she can never recover from it. In the environs of Rio Janeiro, the colonists have swept away the forest. Auguste St. Hilaire, in 1830, found a number of sugar-factories standing still, timber having failed throughout the country-side.

In North America the destruction of the woods is so rapid that soon the forests of Maine, the refuge of the eland and of the last of the Indians, will cease to be aught but a memory.—(*J. A. Springer.*)

But without going so far, all around us, in Spain—that land of light, which ought to cherish the shades—the trees are disappearing from its vast plateaux. The sun burns up and porphyrizes the soil; the wind rages uncontrolled, and raises the dust in dense clouds, —the only clouds which pass under that glowing sky of brass.

And what shall we say of Italy, once so richly adorned with her dense crown of foliage? What have become of the forests of the Apennines, of the great thick woods of its valleys, of the forest of Alba, and the forest of Aricia, where the army of Posthumius disappeared? Nowadays, the mountain is bald, and the Campagna of Rome hatches its malarious marshes. Tuscany sees the last remains of her groves simultaneously attacked by three destructive scourges —the axe, the fire, and the goat.—(*Ridolfi.*)

And of France? How shall we relate the war which the French have waged against our forests? Since the Druids bore away with them the *cutters* of the trees, every age, either through need, or caprice, or cupidity, has entered into a rivalry to exterminate them, and with them to sweep away their traditions. A whole world of

ideas, and memories, and sentiments has perished with them. How many souls, ignorant thenceforth where to conceal their dreams, have exclaimed with the poet,—

" Prends ton vol, ô mon coeur !
La Terre n'a plus d'ombre."

" Take thy flight, O heart, take flight;
From Earth has vanished all her night."

I do not dispute that the soil was in want of clearing, that earth needed space to breathe, and in places to receive more light. Undoubtedly too thick a gloom reigned under the oaks of Gaul. There was need to illuminate it. But to preserve to our France its harmonies, its strong vitality, the prudent equilibrium which is the true wealth of a country, a greater extent of forests ought to have been preserved. They were the natural shelters against cold and parching winds. They summoned into existence the living waters. They tempered also our climates, and saved us from those extremes of heat and cold, of dryness and humidity, which are so fatal to the plant.

It is a singular phenomenon that the moment when man dealt most cruelly with the forests was also the moment when he seemed to wake up completely, and rouse himself from those evil dreams which, at the close of the Middle Ages, he still was cherishing.

A whole people betook themselves to the threshold of the woods, and planted there their tents. The ancient masters of the forest—the respected woodman, the formidable charcoal-burner—ceased to be the sole dispensers of its life and death.

The elms, and beeches, and venerable oaks shudderd with fear. The poisonous yew—the black phantom which, even in death, rears itself erect under the wind to take its part in the lugubrious concert —felt that it was on the point of death, and its race doomed to extinction. It was the being accursed of the ancient forest. Everywhere might be heard the harsh blows of the axe, the strident sounds which went home to the heart of all those great dying

giants; then the noise of their fall, of the whistling air, of the shaking and lamenting earth.

Those *guests* (*hôtes*), as they were then called, were all agriculturists, bent upon the cultivation of the soil. Some made war against the beasts of the forest, and to terminate the campaign more quickly, set fire to the trees. Others, more numerous still, were industrious artizans who worked in wood. From their associations whole villages sprang up. In the Vosges, for example, on the border of the Lake of Gerardmer, was established a guild of sabot-makers. The basket-makers, the bushel-makers, the hoop-makers, would not quit the damp localities which afforded the osier, and other pliant and flexible plants. The cartwrights and carpenters attacked the hardest trees. Each, according to his trade, settled at that part of the forest which best answered to his wants.

At the same time furnaces were kindled for those industries which cannot be carried on without fire. To say nothing of the blacksmiths, there were potters, tile-manufacturers, and glass-manufacturers.

Besides all these patented destroyers and consumers of the forests, there were those who resorted thither for their own little interests. One for the materials of his house, a second for his mill, the baker for his oven. Each plundered after his fashion, and cut, and slashed, and left the poor trees crippled.

In the midst of all these Vandals, I see but a single population really reässuring and wholly sylvan. I mean the resin-collectors of Franche-Comté, who occupied themselves in collecting, for the purposes of lightage, the tears of the firs.

To such an extent was the spoliation of the forests carried, that the terrified State accumulated edict upon edict to protect the remains of its woods. The whole of the sixteenth century was occupied in repairing the disaster, and in drawing up a code of forest laws.

But it is not easy to arrest the progress of an epidemic. The scourge marched irresistible throughout the seventeenth century.

The South especially accelerated it with its soul of fire, violent as the element itself.

The Pyrenees, whose steep declivities had so urgent a need of their trees, to support the crumbling soil, and arrest the avalanches, soberly to distil the snows, and strengthen the natural embankments of the dykes; the Pyrenees, pitilessly devastated, have lost in a hundred and forty years two-thirds of their forests. Nowadays the long chain stretches afar in desolating nakedness. Ramond, that solitary seeker, who spent ten years of his life in endeavouring to ascend Mont Perdu, re-descended, with his soul grieving bitterly over the savage desolation. "All," he says, "grows old with ever-increasing rapidity. A century of Man is more burdensome for earth than twenty centuries of Nature."

The South, by destroying its trees has dried up its springs. It has abandoned the mountains to ruin, and its plains to a couple of scourges—the wind and the flood. The North and Central France bid fair ere long to lose their fuel. Before the Revolution, in 1760, France had thirty millions of hectares in forest: to-day she has less than eight millions.

I do not speak of the towns, which have prosaically adopted coal for their fires. Of this we have enough, perhaps, to last for several centuries.

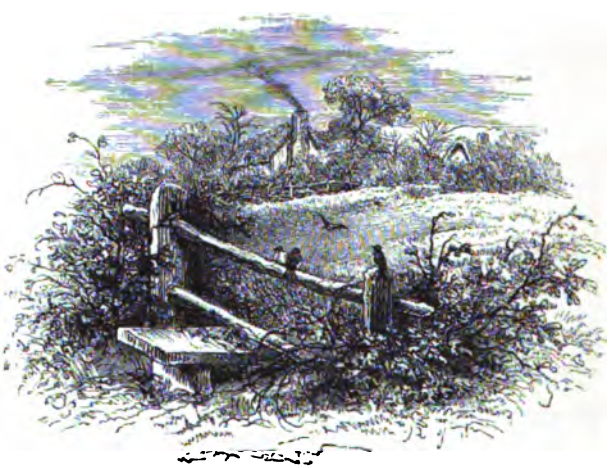
I am thinking here only of the poor, of the peasant, who cannot procure coal. Formerly he could enjoy the bright and cheerful fire, crackling with dry branches, with vine-stems, and the red embers of old stems and roots of trees. In the huge fireplace, the whole family might set winter at defiance. It was always holiday. If the flame languished, the aged father turned over the logs, brought a fresh supply of fuel, and lo! the fire was rekindled. Young faces were lighted up; the old grandmother, in her cozy corner, seemed less austere; the discreet cat closed her eyes, and tucked her paws under her in a state of beatitude; and the dog stretched himself full-length, with a sigh.

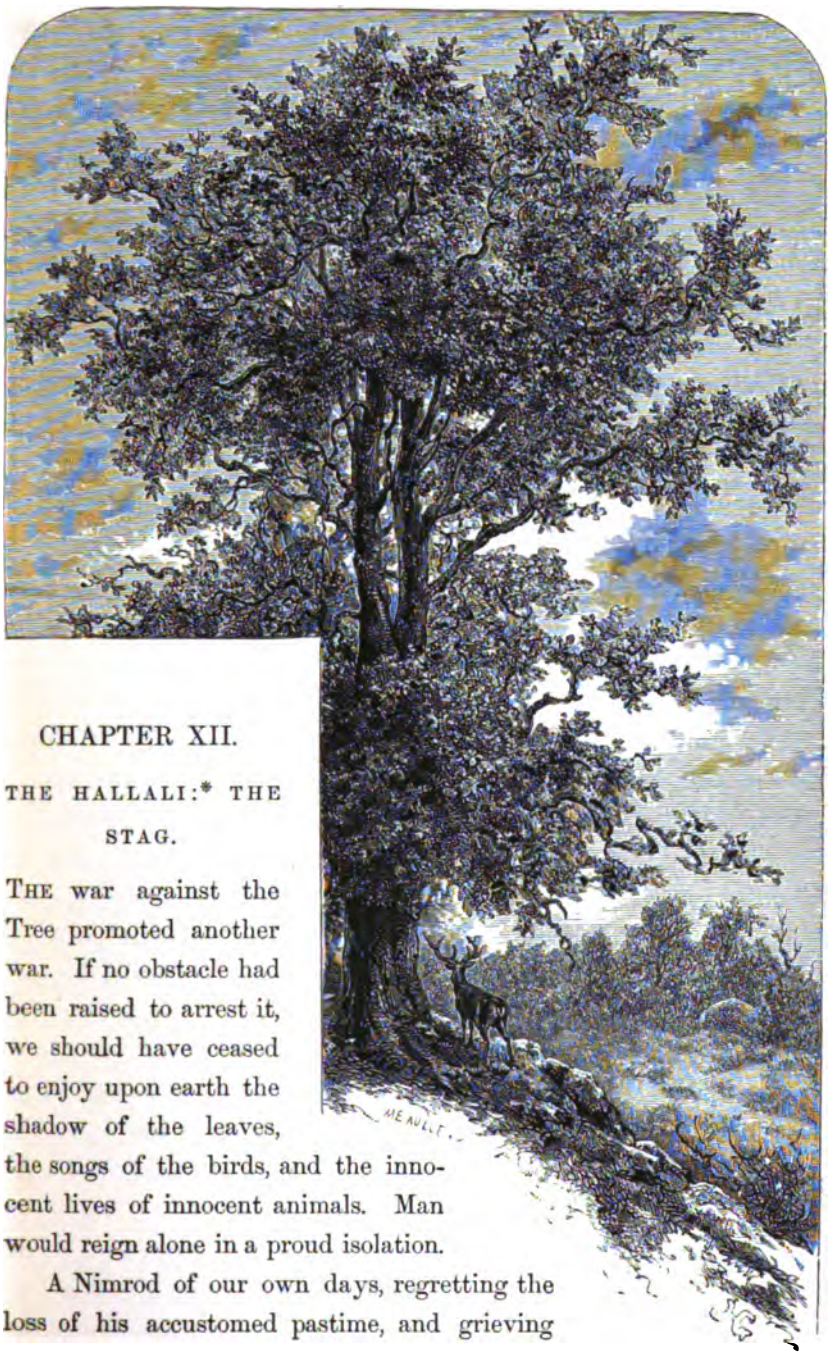
What a vivacity pervaded the household when the meal was quickly served! The whole was beautifully browned, "done to a turn," and with a masterly readiness. Nothing, moreover, could be more agreeable than the hospitality of the farm. You came there

to breakfast, or to dine. No need existed of painfully rekindling the rebellious coals, a task which throws you necessarily into a bad temper. Things were ordered much more quickly, and more successfully. The children brought a log, and, behold, the fire immediately assumed a festival appearance! You were compelled to moderate it, for on all sides it flung out a swarm of sparks.

In my country, the same name is given to this joyous scintillation, and to a lively, spirited dance, which coils, and uncoils, and undulates like a flame—the *bourrée*.

From the country-side which has already lost all its sweet snatches of song, withdraw this last gaiety of the domestic hearth, and France will have lost her smiles.





## CHAPTER XII.

### THE HALLALI:* THE STAG.

THE war against the Tree promoted another war. If no obstacle had been raised to arrest it, we should have ceased to enjoy upon earth the shadow of the leaves, the songs of the birds, and the innocent lives of innocent animals. Man would reign alone in a proud isolation.

A Nimrod of our own days, regretting the loss of his accustomed pastime, and grieving

* [The *whoop* or *mort* used in hunting.]

over the results of his own crime, confesses to us that even the forests of the State, which alone are in any degree respected, have, like the others, lost their natural inhabitants. They are empty, deserted, and silent.

The denizen specially worthy of these fine shades was the Deer. Under their sombre roofs he stalked, a living miracle, a moving forest, —not Macbeth's forest, but with the lofty and majestic branches of his antlers, which project in noble pride.

The ancients, more just than we towards animals, had elected the stag the peaceable King of the Forest. The title was truly his, since he was the forest itself. Every spring, like the tree, he resumed his onward progress, raised his antlers higher, added to their branches, and bound his brow with a beautiful crown. All would say so who have seen the ivy clinging to and coiling around it, and trembling in the wind.

A great hunter, but not, like Nimrod, "before the Lord," saw, in the seventeenth century, a very different sight. One stormy evening, when pursuing a stag to the death, the latter, instead of taking to flight, incontinently issued from the wood, presented himself before Hubert, and dazzled him with the rays of his crown. This was a thing unheard of at that epoch, a grand Host all resplendent with light. Hubert threw himself on his knees before the stag, made him the *amende honorable*, renounced the chase for ever, and became St. Hubert. His conversion, however, did not prevent him from becoming the patron of hunters. In my mind, this has always told to his disadvantage.

The stag, alas! has, in all times, had his enemies. The weak alone took him as their patron (as, for instance, Geneviève of Brabant); but lords and kings declared a bitter war against him, when the commonalty had concluded a truce.

Then, at least, he was counted as an equal by his enemies. From age to age, the traditions and facts were handed down which men had acquired in reference to his habits and his methods of attack. In the midst of the grave affairs of their kingdom, kings could turn their

attention to their rival in the forests. To be princes, they did not think they had confiscated all science. They honoured the stag with a systematised and carefully-planned campaign. The king went in person to plant the *brisées* (or fences), and marvelled at the stories which his huntsmen told him.

Louis XI. even composed a beautiful hunting-song. And at his death it was seen how great had been the passion and true enthusiasm of all his life, when he desired to be buried in his hunter's costume, with his horn by his side.

Charles IX., who, on St. Bartholomew's Day, fired haphazard upon his subjects, showed much more respect for the stag. He received gratefully a well-written treatise upon hunting, from a lord of Poitou, the Sire Du Fouillaux. It is there remarked, in several places, that the stag has its enmities; in other words, that he attempts to oppose his innocent stratagems to the cold-blooded persecution of the hunter.

Nevertheless, he was not as yet the proscribed wretch of our own days, pursued without cessation. He was able to meditate in peace in the far recesses of the woods, and ruminate upon his reproaches against man. In these there was no acerbity. His sad complaint was that of a noble vassal, who proclaimed his right of asylum and protection.

" Si pour sauver des chiens ma fugitive vie,
Seigneur, je viens a toi!
Si je me rends à toi, éperdu, désarmé,
Plutôt qu' aux affreux chiens à ma mort acharnés;
Pourquoi, seigneur, dis-moi sonnes-tu de la trompe?
Pourquoi tendre des rêts? et m'y faire périr?
N'as-tu pas de mon bois, un profit suffisant?
Que de maux il guérit! que de bien il répand!
Chaque année de ma tête il tombe et se refait.
Je te donne mon bois; laisse-moi ma forêt.

" Mais quoi! les sons du cor déjà remplissent l'air;
Je vois le grand veneur, effroi de nos demeures,
Il marque avec son doigt la couche où je repose:
Le cor sonne plus haut! Les chiens vont s'élancer!
La crainte m'envahit, mes peids prennent des ailes.
Mais la flèche est dressée! Ah! je me sens visé.

" Déjà j'entends sonner pour meprendre et m'occire,
Et ce qui s'en suivra, las! je ne puis la dire.

(*Complainté du* xvi*e. Siècle.*)

If from the dogs my wandering life to save,
Seigneur, I come to thee!—if, worn, disarmed,
Confused, I rather yield myself to thee
Than to the terrible dogs which seek my death,—
Why, seigneur, dost thou wind thine horn, and stretch
Thy cruel nets to bring about my end?
Will not my antlers as thy gain suffice?
What ills they cure! what good distribute far!
Yearly they fall, and yearly are replaced.
I give my antlers to thee,—do thou spare
In turn, to me, the forest!

Hark! the sounds
Of the shrill horn already fill the air,
And yonder rides the terror of our haunts,
The master-huntsman! With his finger, lo!
He marks the couch where I have lain my limbs.
Now louder winds the horn! The dogs are slipped;
Fear overcomes me, and my feet are winged;
But swift the arrow flies, and I am stricken.

Already winds the horn again, and bids
The hunters seize and slay me: what ensues,
Weary and bleeding, I've no power to say.

To-day even, when the poor stag has in his blood the troubles and the memories of all the misfortunes of his race, he seems to have lacked the faculty of growing savage, of taking to himself a spirit of gloom, and transforming himself into the open enemy of man. His fine eyes, fringed with long lashes, are sometimes painfully sad, but never hostile. Our cruelty has taught him mis-

trust, without poisoning his natural gentleness. He was never created to hate.

His whole life is inspired by a different sentiment, of which he has the oppression rather than the happiness. Except when, in mid-winter, his fellows draw together, the stag is a solitary. A single brief moment unites him to his mate, and that moment seems the gloomy hour of his existence. He brings to it all the trouble which is born of solitude. Night and day he wanders wildly; without seeing, without dreaming of aught which may injure him. He gallops to and fro, he swims, he pursues the most frequented tracks. Poor, blind, delirious wretch, who may, not improbably, meet with death while he is seeking life!

Once the fever has passed, he ceases to be himself. Weak, weary, and spent,—having lost his soul,—he departs afar, and plunges into the prolonged nights of winter. But these are not for him. He has now but little chance of re-invigorating himself and recovering his energies. The tawny-eyed animal which once shared with him the royalty of the forest, often saved him the agony of living!

And the wolf, too, in an excess of hunger, would cry: "Come, come! poor, miserable, and meagre child, thou art going to slip down my throat!"

But the wolf in the German ballad pursued him for his need; man pursues the stag for pleasure, and, like the wolf, surprises him especially in his hours of feebleness.

To-day we care for nothing but the excitement of the chase,—the intoxication, the vertigo of a moment. The hunters of olden time would have blushed to offer their sovereign an exhausted stag. They would be content with nothing less than a fine ten-antlered animal, in full vigour, which had already smelt the scent of the hounds.

We have changed all. And, particularly, we have become more cruel. We do not shrink from attacking a poor stag at the critical moment when he is renewing his antlers, and hides himself because he knows he is defenceless, and so vulnerable. His new antlers are of such sensitiveness that he cannot walk but with the greatest precautions. He no longer dares to shelter himself in the dense copses.

The least contact with the trunks of the trees might wound him, and draw blood. At this period the stag walks with a bent head.

How great, then, must be his agony, if he is forced to fly through the thorny thickets, and to speed along under the branches which entangle and obstruct him! If he plunges into them heedlessly, he loses his life. Some have been seen, under too rough a shock, to sink in a swoon, as if smitten by lightning.

Nature had been kinder to the deer. She had bestowed upon them, for this moment in their existence, all the flowers of her meadows: —in the woods, the catkins and young savoury leaves; in the hedges, the perfumed hawthorn. They had but to crop, in order to recover their strength. So sweet, so genial was it, that, with a little rest, they would soon have forgotten the miseries of winter. But man has denied them the happy hours which a merciful God designed for them. Nowadays, always on the alarm, timid, restless, hunted, they no longer erect those magnificent antlers, that superb crown, which on a stormy night would kindle into radiance. They have even grown smaller in body, and, like all races doomed to disappear, the stag withers before he becomes extinct.

Formerly the stag was really *hunted;* now, it is simply *run to death.* The hunter no longer hunts, but his horse and his hounds. He has converted his dogs, those innocent beasts, into a band of ferocious assassins. He has so carefully bred and trained them to savagery that they infinitely surpass the wolf, the peculiar object of our dread. They have been inspired with the living hell. With the exception of the blood-hound, which stealthily surprises the stag in his lair, all other dogs yap, and howl, and bark, and fill the forest with their discordant clamours. These are no longer our French dogs, who, less swift than the stag, make up for their comparative slowness by their intelligence. We have imported the dogs of England; fox-hounds who rush straight upon the beast, and force him in a moment.

This is crime—this is premeditated murder. The stag is no sooner started than he is taken. He is surprised in his place of refuge, or has been marked beforehand for death. And death will be his lot all the more quickly, because along the route are stationed relays of young, ardent, and vigorous dogs, which will support the old pack, and carry them along in their swift rush.

The stag can no longer hold out; he must surrender without any attempt to save his poor life. His strength is unsubdued, but he can no longer breathe. Fifty to sixty dogs are already upon him, and he feels, shudderingly, their hot breath against his skin. A pond is at hand; he flings himself into it, thinking to save himself, and is lost. When he reaches the other bank, benumbed by the coldness of the water, he attempts in vain to resume his course. He falls before the enraged pack, who tread him under their feet, bite him, tear him to pieces with their claws, and devour him before he is yet dead.

Will he die thus, without defending himself? Against these cowardly assassins, this too human soul of his, has he nothing to oppose but his tears? Yes; the stag sells his life dearly. All his enemies pounce eagerly upon his body, but who will dare to attack him face to face? Let them but attempt to approach him. They will quickly roll afar in the dust! But now his blood is flowing in torrents. For pity's sake complete your work, and let death deliver him from his agony. Sound the horn; sound a funereal dirge! A hero has gone to his rest.

For this hour of supreme anguish, when the hardest hearts are generally softened, men have found nothing better than a noisy fanfare, which does not even celebrate fitly their vulgar triumph.

Let us turn away our eyes. Let us look together at something truly noble—the masterpieces of Landseer. They form a drama in three acts, melancholy, but full of grandeur. The scene opens on the desert moorland. It is night; one of the deep, dark, silent nights of Scotland. It is night, and it is winter. The snow has already fallen. It whitens everything; both the mountains ruggedly cleft and broken,

and the earth upon which, an image of sadness, lie two branchless and withered fir-trees. From this shroud of snow, a deep lake, which doubles the depth of the night, detaches itself, mute and sombre. Innumerable stars plunge their sharpened rays into the motionless waters. Heavy, blackish mists, unable to ascend, creep along the banks. A stag is there, alone. More sombre than the sombre night, he bells aloud. His eyes penetrate the distance, and apparently descry an invisible being. Yet nothing appears, and the waste is very dreary. But *he* has seen some one on yonder bank. Look well into the centre of the lake. By the gleam of the stars, do you not see a haughty pair of antlers? It is his rival. He speeds towards him with the swiftness of an arrow!

Behold them confronting one another. The night is not now so dark; the moon has risen; she glides pallidly into the mists. The awakened breeze takes captive the waters of the lake. For a moment even frigid Nature seems somewhat moved.

The combat has begun, and the weapons are equal. But the heart is troubled to see that in this terrible combat, this struggle to the death, nothing is visible of brutally savage passion. To hear only those foreheads dashing together, and those antlers locking in one another, you would think their hatred unrelenting. But look in their eyes. They see not, neither do they seek, the enemy. Full of grief, one might almost say of tears, they are gazing far away from the scene of strife—they are piercing the heart of her whom they cannot behold, but who has brought them here together.

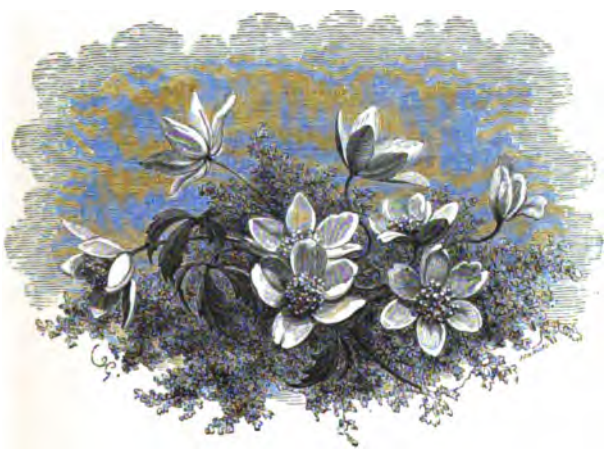
How gloomy is the fatality which changes into bitterness the sole happy moment of their existence!

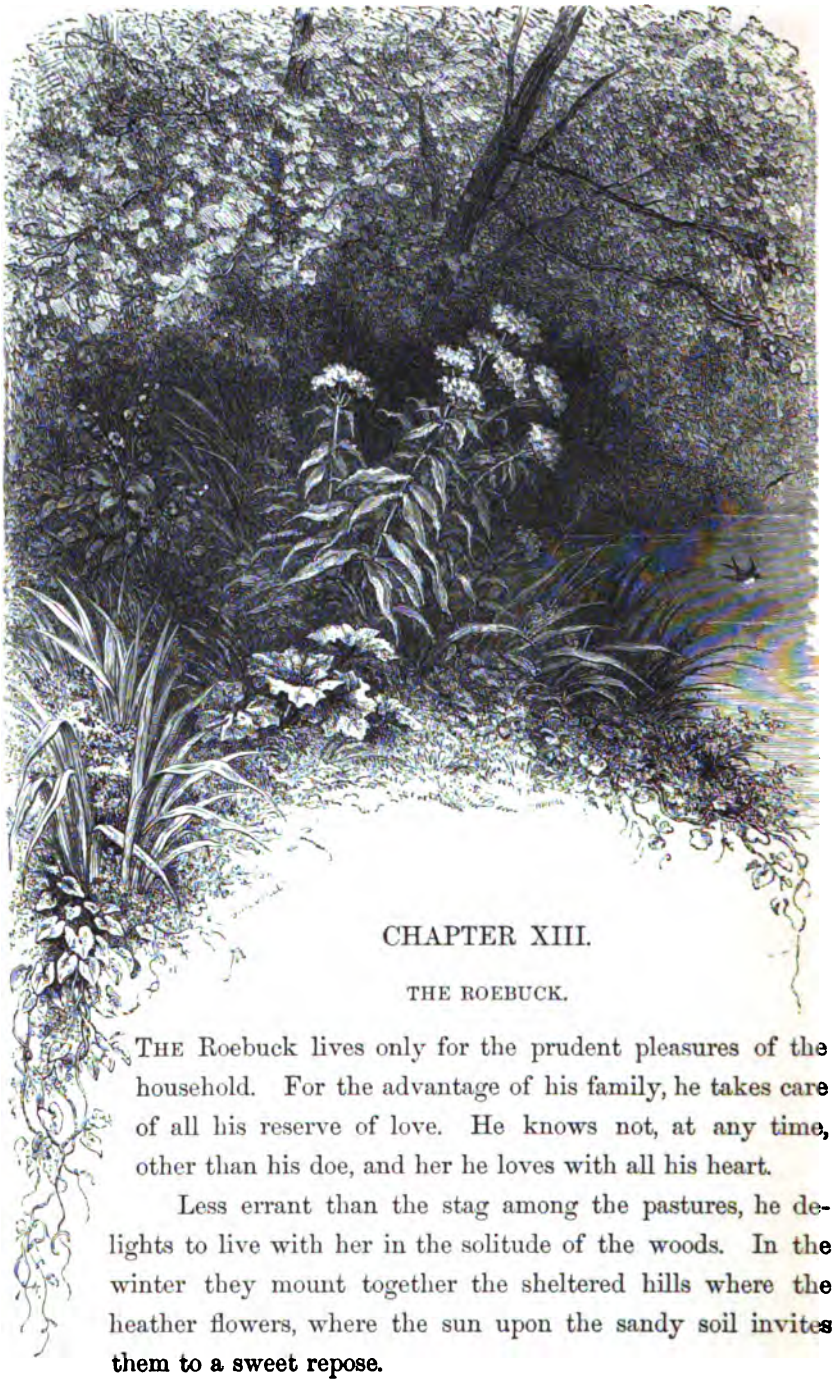
And now it is morning. In yon gray sky the dawn has begun to break. Nature has resumed her pallid fixity. What can be more mournful than the cold day which is approaching?

They are there still; but prone upon earth, motionless, dead! And what a death! In the struggle, and in the darkness, they have so

entangled together their antlers that no effort since has been able to separate them. Cruel Nature had willed their defeat. They have fallen together in a tragical embrace. Their eyes, wide open, humid, veiled with a sad infinity, tell you that in their life love was everything; love darkened by jealous passion, but never by hatred.

Yesterday the dead moorlands were ominously animated. And now, a fox, with pointed muzzle, discreetly comes to scent the prey. From the dull sky descends with swoop of wings the funereal bird, the vulture. He covets those eyes which I would wish to close.





## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE ROEBUCK.

THE Roebuck lives only for the prudent pleasures of the household. For the advantage of his family, he takes care of all his reserve of love. He knows not, at any time, other than his doe, and her he loves with all his heart.

Less errant than the stag among the pastures, he delights to live with her in the solitude of the woods. In the winter they mount together the sheltered hills where the heather flowers, where the sun upon the sandy soil invites them to a sweet repose.

They are not alone; for close beside them gambol two little fawns, the fruit of their tender union. These two children were born on the same day, loved each other before birth, and do not wish to separate. When they shall have grown to their full stature, and their parents shall have other children to rear, they will leave them, but not with melancholy. For they will have felt a something more living than friendship—a something which seeks the solitude.

Sometimes, however, the families feel the want of seeing one another; just as if the does took pleasure in mutually exhibiting their new-born, and inducing them to display their graces.

I remember to have seen, one morning, under the shades of the Prater, at Vienna, one of these graceful assemblages. The parents infused into the scene a certain gravity. But the children! At first they approached one another a little mutinously, pouting with a pretty pout. This did not last. There came into their heads some ideas of defiance. With bended brow they sought one another, and attempted to prove their strength, forehead against forehead. The parents hastened to separate them. The combatants yielded, and sprang from the ground with the leaps of a gazelle, as if to avoid surprises, and put a stop to their play.

Suddenly, they saw me, ceased their gambols, looked at me with astonishment, their head thrust forwards, but a little on one side. A certain degree of haughtiness mingled with their infantine grace. I found them adorable; and the maternal does, I am sure, thought as I did. For a long time they seemed absorbed in watching them. The bird is not more mobile. One of them made a movement, and immediately all the little band was astir. With two or three bounds they disappeared among the trees.

This patriarchal life preserves in the roebuck a moral charm which is wanting in solitary existences. Can the softest sentiments awake in the heart of him who has neither feebleness, nor a family to defend? One grows old quickly if one grows old alone. The secret of perpetual youth lies in being incessantly compelled to play the child.

The "household" of the roebuck, enlivened continually by the wild or pleasant gaieties of the little fawns, is always a *youthful* household.

Usually it is four, but sometimes six in number. The elder-born remind the parents of their happier days. The very young, still tottering by their mother's side, and pursuing them with their plaintive *mi, mi,* keep her somewhat weak. She almost resembles them in size and habits. Thus we cannot ever figure to ourselves an old roebuck, or a respectable doe. The two spouses cannot grow old; they always preserve a something of their infancy. Every moment we detect in them the little graces, the soft caprices, the wilful whims of another age. And in their eyes, as wild as those of a gazelle, sometimes flashes a passing rebellious glance.

We see plainly that the storms of passion (nearly always solitary) have not disturbed them. Loving one another from infancy, seeing one another daily, they have known nothing of life but the calm serenity and tenderness of a mutual confidence. Is their love less fervent? Not at all. Nothing is stronger than protracted habit.

Born only to love, they have not, as a rule, any feeling of mistrust. They seem to think that everything in Nature is good; that it has neither wolves, nor foxes, nor hunters to seek their lives.

But at a certain moment the poor doe becomes restless. The protection afforded by the buck ceases to satisfy and assure her. She quits him, and wanders alone into the deepest glades of the forest.

She is on the point of giving life, and in her poor troubled heart suddenly awakens the idea of death. The tenderness of her mate does but indicate to her their enemies. Nature alone shall be her witness and her confidante. But why does the timid creature go to confront all these dangers? If it be the fox she encounters, she is strong, and he will not depart with the honours of war upon him. But, alas! should it be a wolf, a man!—Well, her little ones *must* live. And she does not hesitate; she rushes to face her enemy, and expose herself to his greediness. Or to excite them she takes to flight, but not very quickly—moving as if with difficulty, and always keeping within reach. If her little ones are saved, it matters little that *she* perishes!

God often protects them all. At the end of a couple of weeks the

fawns follow their mother, and the quadruple household is formed. This takes place in the early part of May: the forest is still in full blossom; and thither they speed rejoicing, to celebrate their return, and, also, the joyous season.

We may be prudent and yet enjoy our little hours of mirthfulness. Nature is benignant. The perfumes of her meadows and her woods mount slightly to the brain. The two mates are not sufficiently careful; they relish the soft catkins, and show too great a partiality towards the heady buckthorn.

The woods are discreet; they see, and are silent. But, lo! the roebuck, like man, experiences an unconquerable necessity of expansion; he becomes too much of the "good fellow." He is desirous of descending into the plain, and of showing himself to the village, and in the rural gatherings.

A story is told to the effect that, some three years ago, a man was returning to his hamlet near the Seine; but a little too merry, and with a slightly hesitating step. At about ten paces distant he perceived something of a tawny colour. It was a roebuck who, like the peasant, was heavy in the head, and had fallen asleep. Without allowing himself to be touched by the analogy of the situation, he resolved on taking the animal prisoner. He had no weapon with which to kill him; so he conceived the idea of throwing his blouse over the body, and tying his feet with the sleeves. It was not a bad idea. But, unfortunately, a sarcastic voice checked his procedure: "Shall we assist you?" Two gendarmes stood by him. The good man protested, and asserted that he had not been hunting. They arrested him, and seized his game. In the struggle, the roebuck had recovered himself; fear had restored his senses. The good gendarme knelt down to unbind him; but he lacked the quickness of the roebuck, which, with a single bound, tumbled him head over heels, and darted away. He was safe in the wood, and without having restored the blouse. In his haste, it is true, he had done it some damage; but he presented himself safely before his doe, half roebuck, and half man. Happily, the does never scold their husbands!

It is the dawn of a beauteous day; both are lying asleep in the thick grass on the verge of the wood, or ruminating over their roebuck's-thoughts (*des pensées de chevreuil*). A moment ago they plainly heard a noise, but all was speedily hushed again, and they can now enjoy their repose in peace.

The sound of a trumpet rings out afar: they feel no alarm. The music pleases them, and they love its echo through the glades. Were it the flageolet or flute, they would be still more enchanted.

But the trumpet-note draws nearer and nearer. Both now spring to their feet, and listen keenly. A new sound sends a shudder through the foliage. It is the blood-hound speeding in swift silence to spring upon the roebuck.

His consort, comprehending the scene too well, is fain to follow him, and share his dangers. *One* in life, they will be *one* in death. But they are separated by the manœuvres of the chase. All the dogs are after *him*, and already they are afar off. He has not hesitated—he has started on his course; alone, and rapid, he has outstripped the pack, and scarcely hears their ominous howlings. He has time to collect himself, to think, and to disconcert the stratagems of his adversaries.

Only one thing is necessary: to prevent them from detecting the path he has taken, and the way in which he intends to go. He runs hither and thither, mingling and crossing his tracks, making a perfect net-work of marches and counter-marches; then he springs from the

earth with a few prodigious leaps, which carry him to a considerable distance.

If he meets with any damp ditches or brooks, he plunges into them, and follows them up. He knows by experience that the water will deaden and cool his scent, that the dogs will waste a long time in endeavouring to recover it, and that the chase, perhaps, may be finally baffled. Lying prone on his belly, with his feet bent under him, his mouth on the ground, so that nothing may betray him, he waits. The pack arrive; they smell about, but indifferently, for they have completely lost the scent. He sees all that goes on from his hiding-place. The hounds are at fault, and he has a chance of life. But now the malice of man interferes to disconcert the roebuck's innocent device. He bends over the ditch, and carefully examines it. A light sparkles in his eyes; he has recovered the track, and all is repaired. Another moment, and the unfortunate roebuck is again in flight.

This time he is less swift in his progress; the brief interval of repose allowed him has not been sufficient. He hesitates to push straight forward. He bethinks himself of her whom he has left behind. He knows that he will find her waiting for him. He is growing weak; he clings to life; and he hastens to ask her help.

So timid when lying at his side this morning, *now* her heart is full of boldness. She offers herself to the dogs; she leaps to the front, she excites them, she starts away like an arrow. The young dogs hasten after her; the whole pack follows; he is saved!

An old blood-hound has remained behind. What does he there, smelling and yelping? He resists the thong of the whipper-in, and seems to say, "'Tis not *he* who is traversing the plain, but *she*, his mate; *he* is here, close at hand, and attempting to conceal himself. I see him, I scent him; and this evening I would fain sup upon venison!"

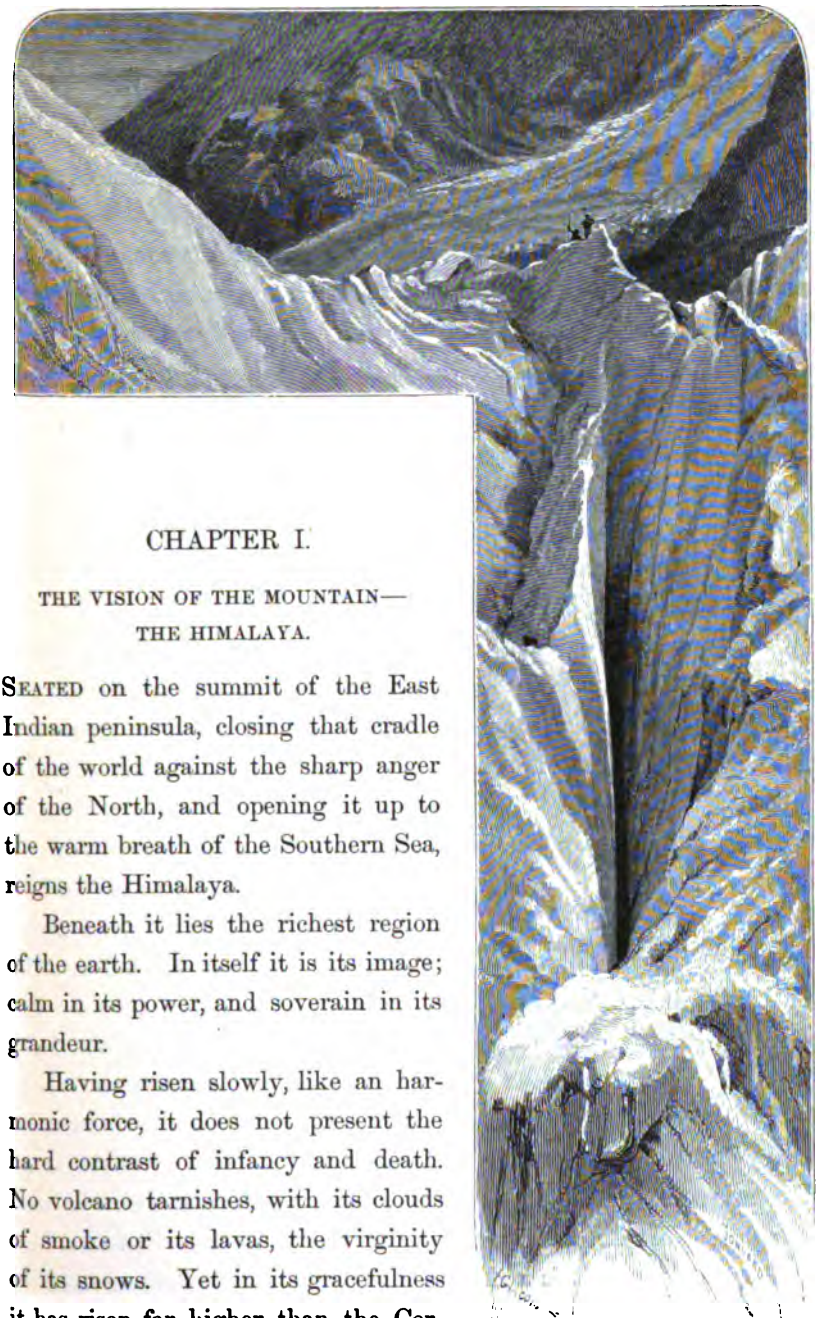
A third time he is away! But he is no longer himself, as may be seen by his track. His gait is unsteady. His heel alone strikes the ground. He runs, with head drooping, and limbs stiff; scared, confused, and panting. The yelping draws anear. He hears it, and it is death!—as hard, alas, for roebucks as for men! He makes one

supreme effort. A ditch is in his path; he leaps it; but the light hamstrings which this morning defied the bird, now fail him utterly. He falls back into the mud! A dog rushes upon him, rolls over with him, and clings to his throat. He utters a hoarse, dull cry—his farewell to life. Twenty jaws rend him in pieces, and quench their thirst in his blood.

The noisy ringing peal of the trumpet announces to the doe that her consort *has* lived. Would she herself live, if she had no children?

In captivity, if one of the two die, the other languishes, continually calls upon him, pines away, and does not long survive him.

MOUNTAIN
SCENERY



## CHAPTER I.

### THE VISION OF THE MOUNTAIN— THE HIMALAYA.

SEATED on the summit of the East Indian peninsula, closing that cradle of the world against the sharp anger of the North, and opening it up to the warm breath of the Southern Sea, reigns the Himalaya.

Beneath it lies the richest region of the earth. In itself it is its image; calm in its power, and soverain in its grandeur.

Having risen slowly, like an harmonic force, it does not present the hard contrast of infancy and death. No volcano tarnishes, with its clouds of smoke or its lavas, the virginity of its snows. Yet in its gracefulness it has risen far higher than the Cordilleras and their burning furnaces,

higher than the region of life. Man cannot reach its summit without perishing.

At that elevation of nearly thirty thousand feet, all animation ceases. The phenomena of our atmosphere no longer act. The thunder-bolt strikes no more; the sky has lost its blueness; does the snow still fall?

Peacefully, and, as it seems, without effort, it has mounted to so vast a height! Its two hundred summits are not, like other mountains, supported by laborious buttresses. It displays before India a noble, rapidly-descending amphitheatre. From summit to base you can perceive at a glance the whole of its immense unity.

Its grand, its peculiar work, is to distribute and transform the waters. It is to its influence we owe that the bitterness and saline vapours of the sea disappear. It creates an ocean of *fresh* water, with which it envelops the divine peninsula, and the rising worlds which gather all around it.

Its innumerable glaciers are so rich, so generous, that they would suffice to water the earth. In spite of the burning South, their mighty mantle descends almost to ourselves, lying low down, at nine thousand feet. They spread over India, under the fires of the Tropics, an eternal refreshment.

In the very heart of the Himalaya the great flood-gates open. To the east they pour out the sacred Ganges and the son of Brahma (Brahmapootra); to the west the Indus, with its five great rivers watering the land of warriors (the Punjaub). They descend into the turmoil of Hindustan, with all its storms.

To the north of the very backbone of the Himalaya, the lofty valleys of Thibet yield an enormous tribute. All these waters, born on the other side of the mountain, would fain see the sun of Hindustan, and the enchanted sea of the South. With how grand an effort must the courageous Brahmapootra have toiled to force its way through the barrier, and blend, in the face of Ocean, with its rival, the Ganges! Truly it is a noble spectacle to see the furious work of these mighty streams which frequently dig out their channels to a depth of three thousand feet. Even the smaller torrents excavate deep

furrows, and gnaw, and devour the mountain. And they arrive at their goal all loaded with mud.

The Himalaya is not a strong fortress like the Alps, complicated with divers systems of mountains, valleys, and suspended lakes. It wears the regular outline of an amphitheatre, which ascends by a gradual succession of belts and stages.

The lower region, beneath the great ditch of sleepy waters, the Terai, is sparsely inhabited. But at an elevation of five to eight thousand feet are arranged the cultivated terraces of the agricultural tribes. Over these fortunate lands hovers a sweet spirit of peace.

Beyond the limit of nine thousand feet stretches the dense forest; dense, but free from parasitical lianas. Ascending higher and higher, it lets light into its shades, and interrupts its beautiful avenues. In front of the glaciers, on the inaccessible peaks, soon mounts alone the melancholy Débora. This is twelve thousand feet above the sea-level. Here solitude prevails; and nought, except Winter, dwells among the lofty heights.

Yet we are still at a vast distance from thirty thousand feet, from the highest summits! In yonder immense spaces not a sound breaks in upon the dream of the grand Solitary.

One would think that with all its masses of ice and snow, it would cast a chill sad look on the world beneath it. But here you have nothing of the stern frigidity of the northern snows. At an elevation where our own can show us nothing but Death, its flaming dome seems the very image of life.

Rama, in his hermitage, says to his charming Sîta:—"Seest thou those sublime crests towering up to the sparkling skies? Some are masses of silver, others of purple or opal, others green as emerald. And yonder peak—we may call it a diamond full of sunshine."

Our Solitary, in its peaceful meditation, enjoys an everlasting pleasure. It sees in itself the Infinite.

Its magnificent girdles are so many different climates, so many different parts of the world.

At its feet burns the Equator, with all its powers of life, its exuberant vegetation, and colossal forms. Midway Europe seems to lie, with all the grace and freshness of the Alps.

While its reverend brow is bound with the diadem of the Poles.

At that enormous height it sees full easily the whole of Hindustan in its framework of Ocean. At its extremity, which almost touches Ceylon, it marks the elevation of divided summits which long to approach it—its two daughters, the Eastern and Western Ghauts. They bring to it within their verdurous arms a gigantic cornucopia, as it were, full of all mundane life, forests, animals, flowers, and fruits.

Nearer to it, and on its right, suspended to its paternal flanks, extends the long valley of Kashmir, where the seasons divide the grand hours of the year. The indulgent sun permits the free breath of Nature, and Winter comes—but an Indian winter—when the delicate light morning snow prepares for the moderate Eden-like warmth of noon.

Framed in a noble circle of granite, it presents that divine curve

which is found in all things really beautiful and living. Seek not in its depths the choking dreams of the burning world, the stormy reveries which belong to the red lands below, with their burden of heavy poppies.

Kashmir has preserved all the freshness of its past, of what it was —a lake which rapidly emptied its basin without leaving behind it any stagnant, deadly waters. No sign of the lake has remained but an emerald green, and a few scattered pearls.

From on high its father Himalaya incessantly renews these pearls from his treasury of snows. And the grateful valley delights the paternal gaze with all the sport of its living waters. They hasten across the meads, and under the blossomy groves, mingling with the calmer waters of the lakes and reservoirs. Along the river-sides—on the banks of the Hydaspes, and on the canals which traverse the valleys—our poplars have grown in extensive and magnificent avenues. Upon the sloping expanse our plane-trees let fall their shadows.

The world, exhausted in the low-lying plains, comes to Kashmir to gain a re-invigorating force. Every year millions of pilgrims climb up its slopes, under the showers of the flowering-trees of Europe—the cherry, the apple, the peach.

In the valley, temples founded amidst the lotus-loaded lakes, concentrate in their thermal waters the miracle of resurrection. You have but to drink to revive your soul.

A new soul seems to dwell in these island-temples, as in many others which have sprung from the primitive inspiration of the Hindu art. Obviously they are intended to be a reproduction of the deep mountain-caverns, and to preserve something of their shadowy freshness. Their artists, in their ornamentation, have imitated the exuberance of the Tropical vegetation, of rich plants, of fruits swollen with juices, and others which offer obscure and fantastic enigmas.

On the contrary, the Mussulman art, in its light and shapely forms, has preserved that natal inspiration which was the impulse of the cypress. In its Hindu efforts it has imitated only the sublime domes, the audacious peaks, resplendent with whiteness and light. Is not

this the winged soul? And yet it seems to me that the Himalaya prefers to look elsewhere than towards the pinnacles of the minarets. Is the birth-place of the divine Sîta, then, not valued by it? Does it not recover itself in the immense monument which was the god's cradle, a city of seven enclosures, a city ten leagues in circumference? All this space is nowadays covered by a dense and gloomy forest!

The remains of this cradle of Sîta (who was India personified), form, even in their abandonment, a sweet small landscape, with a tiny lake, whitened by lotus-flowers, where the winged lotus, the lotus bird, darts hither and thither like the lightning—a pheasant of dazzling plumage.

As in the days of Sîta, all the beasts of the earth hold here their rendezvous,—peacocks with constellated tail, and every species of bird; the wild-boars in the dense thickets; nearer the lake the great spotted stag and the tiny antelope; and the endless sports of the nimble ape, the favourite of India.

The living waters have ceased to flow, and the impetuous river to bound in cataracts over the seven enclosures. The seventh was a masterpiece of giants, built to endure as long as the Himalaya. Art, however, was not forgotten. Three hundred temples lie underneath the forest, which has invaded all the land. What we see nowadays, —the spiral towers, with their exquisite ornamentation,—exhibits a patient art and a pious devotion which must have been employed upon their work for centuries.

But let the temples crumble into dust, or lie buried in their own ruin, yet Hindustan will never cease to possess her sanctuary. In whatever direction she bends her gaze, she beholds it throned in the azure of heaven. Happy or wounded, the soul rises of its own impulse towards the lofty mountain; a motion of the inner wing has detached it from earth; it has soared into the eternal peace.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MISSION OF THE MOUNTAIN.

I HAVE shown the Mountain in its sublime type of pacific grandeur. But the Himalaya, which has been to us, as it were, a *résumé* of the Earth, reveals to us also History and the Past.

It relates to us how, in the first ages, rose the grandest of all mountains, the Earth. Its most ancient forms are the most delicate. Encountering no obstacle in a crust which did not then exist, it freely followed out its own spirit of expansion towards the light, towards its father, the Sun.

I said so, recently, in a little book from which I borrow these few lines. The further back we plunge into the infinite of ages, and the nearer we approach the primitive forms and creations, the less we see of strife. The struggle, the effort of interior expansion against the resistances created on the surface, came at a later period. The Earth, in its earlier hours, enjoyed peace.

It is a beautiful and religious thing that our century, putting on one side the wild idea of perpetual cataclysms or catastrophes, has recognized in these primitive formations the tenderness of a maternal incubation. God has not created the worlds by thunder-claps. Their first development took place in a slow and pacific genesis.

Far from the Mountain being an accident, the effect of a violent spasm of Nature, the Earth laboured only too heavily in her inner dilatation, with the burning heat which she felt in herself, which expanded and pressed upon her slender crust. A tendency so powerful, that if the forces of recall and concentration had not moderated it, she would apparently have escaped, and broken from her own fetters. But a happy equilibrium being preserved about her, the Earth gradually grew calm, and completed her organization, labouring like a good and prudent workwoman (as the great English geologist has entitled her).

She assured her safety against herself, and partitioned out the forces of her elements. To the water-arteries which visibly furrow her surface, respond in their place underneath certain arteries of fire, of a fire more intense than that of which we dispose. But this fire, however great its energy, could avail nothing unless the water came to its aid. The crust of the Earth being thickened and indurated, the heavy and compacted lava sinks below. But bring to bear upon it a little of the light vapour which wanders to and fro in invisible corpuscules, and it begins to rise. Worlds make their appearance—whether violently, and set closely together above a narrow furnace—whether gradually impelled on high, and slowly mounting in one vast aggregate, as is the case with modern Sweden.

A singular, an unexpected circumstance, and one which awakens many dreams, is, that at the very points where you would have expected the accumulated forces of the earth to have elevated mountains, you do not meet with them. They are found in the Tropics, but not under the Equator.

Under the Equator, then, the Ocean reigns, and makes the circuit of the world. Yet the physical force, if uncontrolled, and the power

which we call our logic, would assuredly have planted a range of mountains at the Equator.

But our globe, in such a case, would no longer have been inhabitable, nor have possessed any organic law. The sun falling full upon it, without a cloud, would have created the most frightful deserts. The winds issuing from the furnace would have carried across its surface only death and thirst.

Earth has been wiser than our logic, and, especially, more maternal. Covering herself with water at her burning girdle, she has by this means raised a protecting screen, a dense continuous *cloud-ring*, whose beneficent obscurity overspreads everything. It protects the few lands which have sprung into existence, and conceals them from the deadly rays of the sun.

It is the Equator which does this good work for Earth. It opens the great flood-gates of the warm currents which are destined to kindle and animate the icy extremities of the world. In exchange, the Poles communicate the calming influence of their frozen waves.

That which Nature has accomplished below, in the sea, the air has accomplished above. The aerial ocean knows no different law.

In the sea the living atoms of the warm currents, as soon as they feel the cold, perish, sink to the bottom—a rain of imperceptible infusoria, whose destiny it is to create the worlds of the future. In the air the hot vapours, coming in contact with the Polar winds, grow heavy and descend. If they did this at a single blow, they would fall in wild waterspouts and deluges, and the world, submerged, would perish. It is absolutely necessary that the sea, preserving at the Equator the free respiration of its huge caldron, should possess, at the point where all these vapours descend, reservoirs capable of moderating and retarding their action. These magnificent reservoirs, raised from the earth at intervals, and especially in the Tropics, I would denominate *intermediary poles*, which, much more effectively than the Poles themselves, arrest the water-swollen clouds, and do not suffer them to do more than dispense their treasures in moderation. The glaciers and their snows are simply elevated seas: a vertical ocean, whose function it is, like that of the other, to set its waters in circulation; but discreetly,

on condition that they change themselves into light vapours, or discipline themselves in streams, as they wend their way afar to distribute refreshment and fertility.

Thus do we see the system of the waters admirably ordered. The Himalaya, the Cordilleras, the Alps, are their vigilant guardians, their wise distributors. When the warm season comes, they will descend, vivacious and joyous, to the plain athirst.

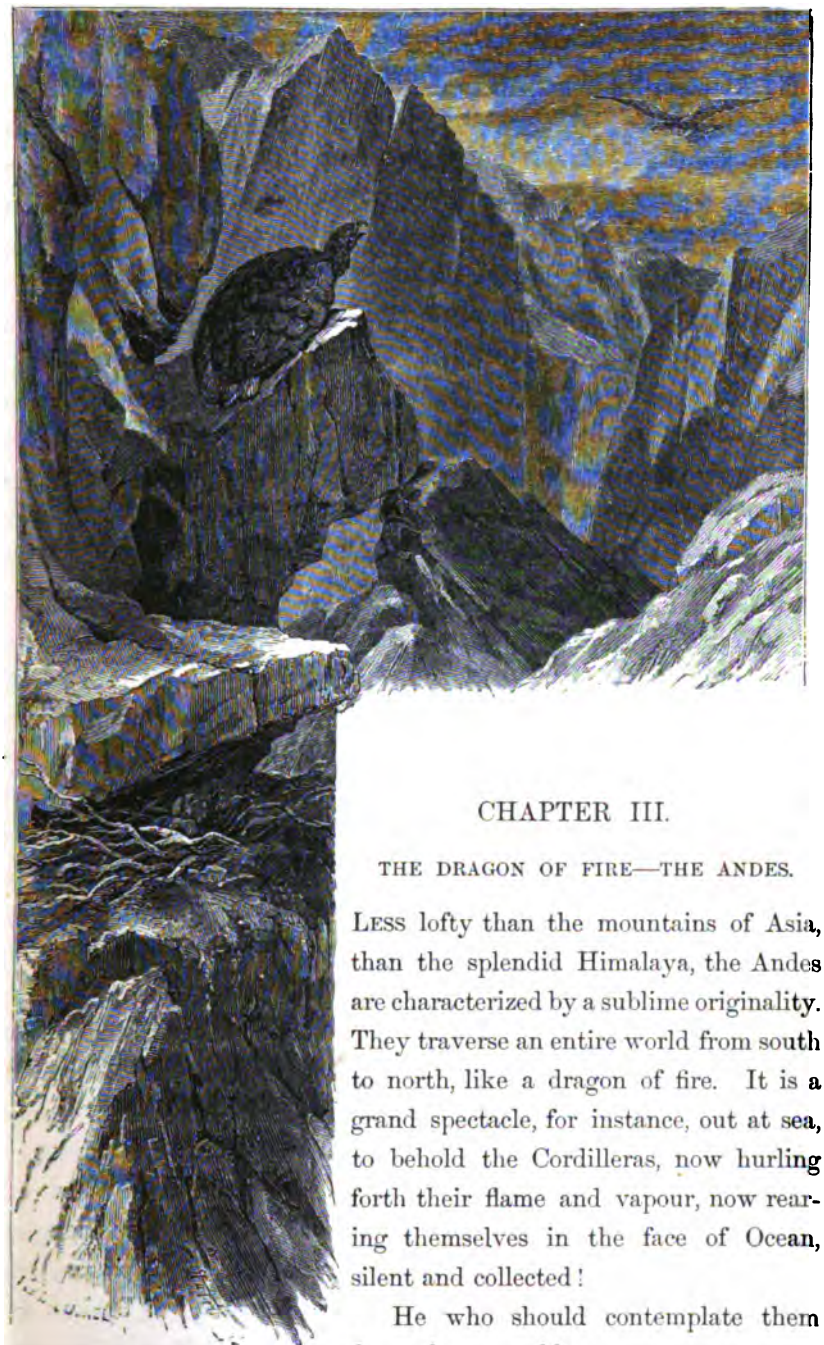
But the poor Earth, who has carried so high her immense reservoirs, is she not buried alive under these fortresses of stone? How will she contrive to breathe, and share in the world's universal life?

They have frequently been planted at the very points where underneath an ardent furnace is burning, or a stream or artery of fire is circulating. Already oppressed by her own weight, and her manifold obstacles, Earth pants. What must happen, then, when the mountain rises some thirty thousand feet, and with its burden becomes an invincible difficulty? Why, nothing is subtler than fire. It is precisely through the lofty mountain, which would apparently choke the earth, that Earth respires, and finds a channel for her breath.

If such a mountain as the Himalaya has been upheaved slowly, and with a continuous sigh, others (the Celestial Mountains), lying far beyond, burst forth in smoke and flame. The mouths of their volcanes open wide, through domes of snow. With their light vapours they ease Earth's respiration. The glacier is illuminated by their phosphorescent gleams.

And again, nearer to our own lands, Stromboli, born with a violent spasm, has pierced its crater, whence you may see the force, incessantly leaping, of panting, incandescent breath! In time it will grow large as Etna; will build an island with its lava; and on this island will raise a tower, a gigantic pharos, which in stormy nights, and amidst shifting lightnings, shall guide the seaman by its steadfast gaze.

It is given to the New World only to see the captive genius of the Earth escaping regularly under pressure, and skilfully opening a succession of vents or mouths, that she may respire at liberty from one Pole to the other.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE DRAGON OF FIRE—THE ANDES.

Less lofty than the mountains of Asia, than the splendid Himalaya, the Andes are characterized by a sublime originality. They traverse an entire world from south to north, like a dragon of fire. It is a grand spectacle, for instance, out at sea, to behold the Cordilleras, now hurling forth their flame and vapour, now rearing themselves in the face of Ocean, silent and collected!

He who should contemplate them from above would see so many coursers,

as it were, running simultaneously upon several oblique lines, and all converging to the same goal. Scarcely connected by any link, you would see them holding apart from one another.

The prolonged double and frequently triple chain is but a series of contractions and dilatations; a powerful animal, or, as it were, an immense annelid, which, at intervals, draws together its ganglions, and concentrates its furnaces of life. True furnaces, in fact, whence respiration issues! It mounts from below in proud plumes of flame, or else contents itself with throwing off the vapour of its hot breath.

It does not circulate stiffly, like a mechanical force; it undulates like a spiral; it follows a series of beautiful curves, inclining towards the Pacific, or diverging towards the immense plain of the Pampas.

The activity of the forces which animate it secures an equilibrium underneath. Its volcanoes alternate from east to west, or plant their furnaces in the very centre. And sometimes they kindle simultaneously upon two parallel chains, and girdle the lofty valley with an horizon of fire. Then, all is at peace. The immense locomotive advances, irresistibly and tranquilly.

Launched for the first time from Chili, by the mighty impulse of the volcano of Aconcagua, for five hundred leagues it compresses its breath, undulates across Bolivia and Peru in beautiful domes of granite and porphyry.

But above Quito, on the majestic equatorial terrace, it must once more draw breath. Ten volcanoes suddenly open, to provide a passage for its burning sighs; to relieve, within the Torrid Zone, the choking sensations of the earth, and save an endangered world.

Some flame at intervals; others spread abroad vast canopies of smoke, or light up the scene with lurid flashes. The most formidable, Sangay, is a gigantic image of Stromboli. After this magical illumination, all is extinct. The long uncoiled serpent passes, like an arrow, the two oceans, over the narrow isthmuses of Darien and Panama. At the extremity of Mexico it rears itself erect, and for

the third time respires; but not with a gentle respiration—the earth, for a far distance, reels beneath the shock.

This is not enough, however; and more to the north, on the high Mexican plateau, which, with its panting, it has raised aloft, suddenly rises another mountain—a mountain of fire, of water, of mud—the Jorullo, and its innumerable children.

The most ancient volcanoes are the least formidable. They have regulated what the Mexicans so happily call their *respiraderos*. We hear, as at Quito, the pulse throbbing every five minutes.

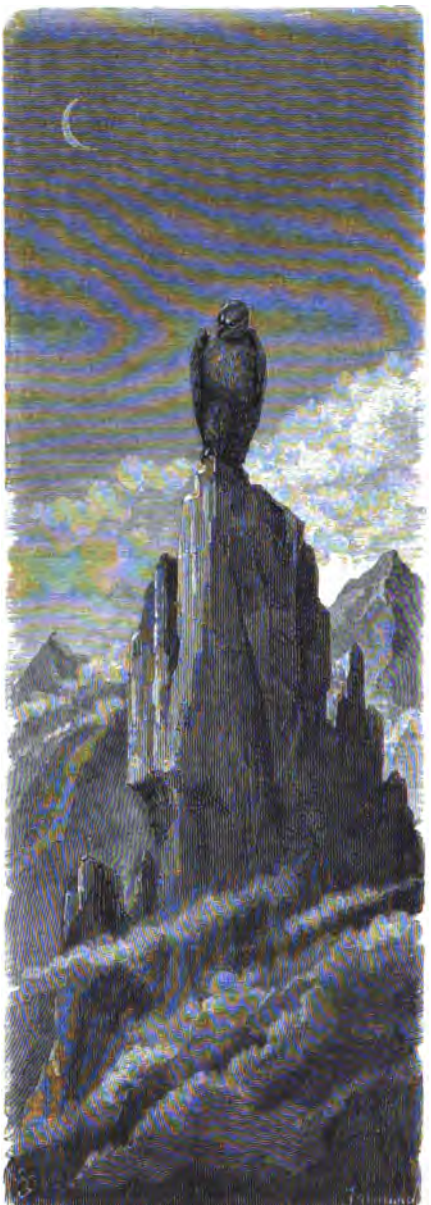
At night, under the pressure of the cold air, which plunges into the wide-yawning mouth, and is felt as a burden, the respiration becomes more difficult, the dragon hisses ominously, and, with its broken breath, the dying lights beneath the crater palpitate.

These reservoirs, these arteries of fire, with their peril and their force, alone have had the power to elevate so high that mighty mountain-chain, to double and treble its links in South America, and in North America to project them to the very end of the world.

Tranquil to-day in the east, on its arm of the Rocky Mountains; in the west, at the extremity of the Sierra Nevada, facing the Pacific; it kindles upon the summit of the great Mount St. Elias the first of those pharoses which, from the peninsula of Alaska to Kamtschatka, illuminate the mists of the Northern Sea with a semicircle of fire.

Never was more visible the necessity under which the earth labours of respiration. And just as if the forces of the globe, like those of the animal, had need of repose to recruit themselves, you see, along the immense circuit of the Cordilleras, the volcanic mouths opening or closing, and alternating their periods of rest and inactivity. A crater which, in the memory of man, has made no sign, suddenly trembles, and, as it awakens, rocks the earth. Sometimes, too, all breathe simultaneously, and stir themselves like a sick man who cannot find a moment's slumber. During the whole sixteenth century, the entire Cordilleras, from Guatemala to Chili, was in convulsions. Craters might be seen to launch flames of blue and red, which apparently

descended from the sky. They inflamed the blackness of night with an ominous conflagration.



Then, also, as in lesser conflagrations, a great shadow suddenly spread around, followed by a hoarse rattling. The summit of the mountain had fallen in, had been engulfed in the crater, had extinguished the volcano. Another woke up just in time, and re-opened its broad mouth, more terrible than ever after its prolonged repose.

Are not these Cordilleras, with their lofty valleys, and the tremor of their internal storms, a desert? Is not the sole inhabitant of their passes, loftier than the passes of Mont Blanc, that bald, black bird, so partial to vast spaces which its keen gaze can penetrate,—the solitary vulture? One might say, in fact, that these valleys, often borne at a height of upwards of twelve thousand feet in the arms of the giants, are the nests of the condor. The lofty summits seem but to have the dream of two infinities; the infinity of the Ocean, and the infinity of the Plain. They alternate in their course, as if to change their point of vision; sometimes towards the sea of herbage, and the great rivers springing from it; sometimes

towards the ocean, which everlastingly rolls at their base the assault of its billows.

But with the deepest love ought their gaze to rest upon themselves, at the bottom of these beautiful cup-like basins which they encircle with their arms. Therein is life. In yon elevated valley the American has built his towns. They are the witnesses of his antique civilization. Lower down, eastward, in the heat and humidity, human energy must have failed. But there on high, if the volcanoes will but slumber, Nature is made for Man. Cold airs are unknown. The Cordilleras, notwithstanding their enormous elevation, have no glaciers. The snow freezes on the summit; but you never see, as on the Alps, long rivers of ice descending into the valleys. Westward, opposite the broad Pacific, the waters are rare. The heat which rises from the volcanoes, the crevasses which gape around the craters, seem to melt and absorb all the snows.

On a solitary point of the Andes, where the fires are extinct, lies a noble reservoir of eighty leagues, at a greater elevation than the summit of Teneriffe (12,000 feet). In its calm, limpid waters are mirrored the proud peaks of Bolivia and Peru. There shall you find the heart of America, and its cradle, where the first of the Incas was born.

More to the north the dryness is so great, and the equilibrium of the atmosphere so constant, that in many valleys the thunder-roll is never heard. The poor rely so surely on the serenity of the sky that they spare themselves the toil of erecting a roof to cover their heads. On the *other* side of the Cordilleras, in the *paramos*, which elongate like the long Jura valleys, the storms are continual. For several hours daily, at a height of nine and ten thousand feet, the hurricane is let loose—rain, wind, and hail mingle with the lightning.

At this point, where the Andean passes sink to a lower level, it seems as if the encounter of two antagonistic forces took place—from the west, the tense, thirsty, electric air; from the east, the moist, heavy air, which rises from the Pampas, from their fresh-

water sea. It is only in the storm that the adverse spirit of the two worlds is neutralized and united.

The great flood of life is driven westward. Man, enjoying the peacefulness of the heavens, has regained confidence in the Earth. In spite of her habitual tremor, and her ruins, which relate the tragical history of the Past, he allows himself to indulge in continuous hopefulness, and rebuilds his shattered cities.

There is every inducement—perhaps there are too many—to live in its beautiful valleys. But will not their dry, light, stimulating air keep the mind in too feverish an activity? Will not that tiny flame, which we call life, be all the more quickly extinguished? You would say so when you saw, in Peru or Quito, the sleepy datura rising and expanding everywhere. At night only does it awaken, open wide its white corollas, spread abroad its perfumes—perfumes deadly to the incautious. But at a distance they are no more than the calm, the drowsiness, the true slumber, which repairs the agitations of the preceding day.

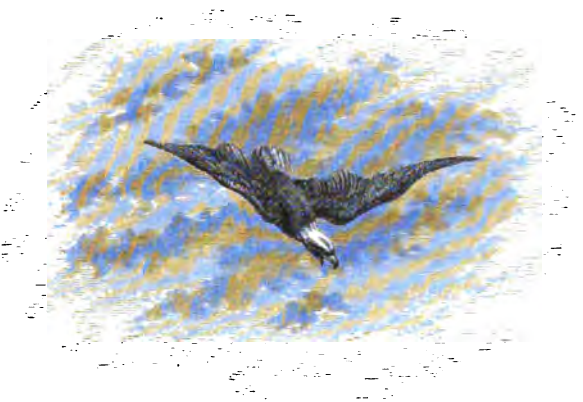
He who first, from the plain of the Pampas, saw the sublime crest of the Cordilleras touching heaven, had but one desire:—to discover what lay concealed beyond the barrier. Vasco Nuñez de Balbao, the companion of Pizarro, enjoyed the intoxication of this first glance, but only from the hills of Panama.*

To contemplate the Southern World from the summit of the loftiest peaks became the dream of the founders of Science,—of the Bonplands, the Boussingaults, the Humboldts. When the latter great interpreter of the mysteries of Nature passed the Scylla of Peru, he ascended for a considerable space, then descended, to reäscend again, encouraged by the promise of the Indians dwelling in each valley that he should at length behold the sea, which ever concealed itself from

* [So Keats sings, but mistakes the real hero :—

" Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise,
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."]

his ken. When, at length, the void was opened before him, and at his feet the veiled sky was suddenly illuminated, the immense Pacific, inundated with light, receded from his eyes to the furthest limits of the world. He would have felt that he was dominating over the abyss of Nothingness, if from below had not risen into the light air the sound of human voices, and the vibration of the guitar.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SADNESS OF THE LOFTY DESERTS.

We are wrong to see the Mountain only in the grand walls reared erect against heaven, or in the enormous castles, bristling with battlements and turrets, whose defensive works are the avalanches and the glaciers—Alps, Himalayas, Pyrenees, and Cordilleras.

Notwithstanding its air of grandeur, this chain or that colossal mass is nothing compared with the immense table-lands which have been elevated in one single piece, without peaks or domes, without gorges or ravines.

We climb to a height of five thousand feet; and before us spreads a plain—a plain which extends two thousand leagues into Asia.

The most imposing mountain-chain is but a thin screen between two antagonistic worlds. On one side, often the deadly fixity of winter; on the other, all the expansions of life. It is but a pass we have to cross.

While upon this table-land—which might not unjustly be called an immense island, without any relation to the lower world that encircles it—uniformity stretches far away into infinity.

All the lofty deserts of the Old World lie in the East. The whole earth, on this side, has followed the summons of the Light. In America, on the other hand, she has raised to the West her Cordilleras and her elevated valleys. It seems as if the world, then in its very youth, had raised itself upwards with a solitary impetus. With its intense inward throbbing, with its internal flame, it made everything spring upwards.

Europe alone is not saddened by these dead solitudes. Her elevated plains are never completely sterile nor completely desolate. But the rarity or entire absence of trees often gives them a curious resemblance to the ocean. An ocean, green and tremulous in spring; gray or tawny in the dry heats of summer; white under the mourning-robe of winter,—always melancholy.

I felt this very deeply when crossing, in a December month of peculiar rigour, the great table-land of Bavaria. The freshly-fallen snows were so dense that we found it necessary to remove the wheels of our carriage, and convert it into a kind of sledge.

We met no one on the road, but everywhere *ex voto* memorials, and churches which seemed as if they were intended for the worship of spirits. A great wind sometimes arose, and swept over us in wild billows, which drove the snow into whirling wreaths: we were white as statues. Sometimes we traversed dark woods of fir, which bore on their shorn arms, as if scared and threatening, long stalactites of ice. The scene was beautiful by day, for then the pale winter sun poured its rays upon it. At night it was solemn and gloomy. The firs were transformed into black and white phantoms. The moon flung strange gleams upon the icicles. The subdued wind rose again towards midnight, and rang and clattered among the stalactites: the sounds were metallic, like the clanking of armour, or of the weapons of fantastic giants. In the vast plain silence quickly returned: the steppe deepened before us, void like nothingness.

But if winter be truly death, when the bright spring returns the herbage again springs forth; then barley, concealed beneath the snow, thrusts through it the gaiety of its emerald green; the cattle resume their wanderings, and the echoes resound with their melancholy bell.

If, as in Hungary, the steppe is thinly sprinkled with pools, all the birds of the marshes and of the moorlands make them their rendezvous. It is always a day of rejoicing when the shepherd notes the appearance in the sky of the black and white bird which does not sing, but flies to the peasant's cottage and there builds his nest. O faithful stork!

"When I was weeping in my cradle she hovered, flying above my head. When the autumn came, with a full heart I saw her set out on her distant migrations.

"And when she returned, little as I was I dragged myself to the end of my neighbour's meadow to meet my stork.

"But now that the spark has become a flame, and the child a young man, I mount my horse, and with rapid hoof speed across the *puzta* (the steppe). At its most solitary point I descend from my horse; I throw myself on the grass, and listen to the murmurs of the air. Suddenly, on the edge of the morass, what do I perceive? My friend!—it is she! Both have traversed the steppe. Ah, how I love thee, my stork! How I love my *puzta*, and its free, wide spaces!"—(*Portufi.*)

One feels that here tenderness is mingled with melancholy. It is that these grand plains are daughters of the rich alluvium of the fresh waters, the dried-up lakes, the broad rivers. Along their routes they have deposited the black and fertile mould.

The pale, sad Desert is the offspring of the bed of dried-up seas. In all places, however high they may have risen, we see who was its mother: the salt and sand bear witness to it. And to the eyes everything speaks of that which is no more. You constantly think that before you is an ocean—an ocean in storm or in calm. If upon the clay the gypsum has put forth the gray annise, the gray wormwood, the glaucous euphorbium, or the pale thistle, the illusion is only the stronger: it is a sea of plaster, which heavily begins to flow.

Everywhere upon these lofty deserts we meet with the same labour—one might say, the same willingness of Nature—to exhaust the seas, and for thousands of years to abandon the scene to nothingness and the void.

If the rude herbage of the Asiatic steppes render their deserts more gloomy, the vegetation of the Mexican plateaux has in it a character of terror. On all sides start up from the ground the fantastic apparitions of the cactuses. Upon the hardened, calcined earth they have taken root. Under the flaming sun, in the burning sand, bursts forth this strange creation—a plant which is nothing but water: no arms, no leaves; nothing but an enormous stem mounting one hundred feet in height—a gigantic spiny boa, swollen with juices, which rears itself erect. Others, nearer the earth, contract into balls bristling with darts. Others imitate the sea-animals, enlarging into menacing gorgons.

The amiable verdure of our European vegetation is nowhere visible. That of Mexico is glaucous and farinaceous. It is impossible to say whence its cactaceæ draw the water which expands them. When they have drank once, they have drank for ever. The thirsty air will lick them greedily, and will say, "I am athirst;" but they will not yield it a drop. Theirs is a mysterious power of collecting the smallest atoms of humidity which the night brings with it; and a power no less mysterious retains, guards, accumulates, and covers these treasures.

When they are dead, dried-up, whitened skeletons, they seem more terrible still. One might speak of them as spectres, waving to and fro their mighty arms, and guarding the entrance of the Desert.

Do not let us rise to the Salt Desert of Utah; let us rather make towards Asia, that region of table-lands. They exhaust two-thirds of its surface. On their vast shoulders the mountains have arisen. Between and among their broken outlines folds and refolds the sea of sand or hardened clay. From distance to distance salt lakes are sprinkled. Rivers of fresh water flow there in the vicinity of the mountains. Sometimes, in the spring or autumn, the sky for a moment favours the earth with a little water; the oases, scattered like the lakes, display a temporary greenery: a brief moment, which we must hastily seize to bring the wandering herds back to this pasturage.

Soon the herb will have dried up, the spring will cease to flow, the summer storms will rise. The wind asserts its sway, and at its pleasure the desert changes its countenance. Rather should I say, the wind. If in the windings of the steppe it pounces down like a single spirit to overthrow every obstacle, on the heights—the rocks which suddenly rear themselves erect—it is struggling with itself. The storm is truly fantastic. The rocks seem like a loadstone to attract it, and then repulse it, incessantly. It struggles with wild rendings—with strange voices, which remind us of the human voice, its cries of distress. With rage it bites the stone—with rage it turns itself from it; it whirls and sweeps around and around from the four quarters of the world.

When it is sand which it draws up in its unseen spiral coil, you see it rise in columns of two hundred feet, advance to the assault, then fall beneath its own burden, and create a lofty mountain. At other times it wills to sweep across the steppe. It is twofold: on high, you hear it pass, like a wave, with hoarse murmurings; below, it whistles and glides under the impalpable dust, and thrusts before it the desert. Under such a sheet of sand the water-sources disappear, and in due time the lakes will be filled up.

The pilgrim travelling towards Mecca, the Turcoman launched in pursuit of man, the Kirghiz wandering at the head of his flock,—all tremble at the dangers of these fatal winds. They have sown the desert with bones. Will he who rides the slow Bactrian camel see the goal of his pilgrimage? How many remain in sight of the Promised Land! It is without avenues: nothing in front, nothing in rear. The desert suddenly ends, and begins again. If the sand-waves have filled the desired well, he must start once more on the weary journey, with a heavy head, frenzied by the mirages of hunger and thirst. The water-bags are empty. The more fortunate traveller who has preserved a few precious drops conceals them, in his savage egotism. The son hides them from his father; the father from his son. He sees him dying, he hears his prayer of agony; but his bowels are dead to pity. He keeps on his way apart, sombre, impassable, mute.

But yonder the oasis reveals itself—the oasis, which means life and

vigour. Too late! In vain the fresh and limpid water offers its re-invigorating draught—death claims its victim: with arms outstretched towards the spring, he invokes it, and calls upon it. The last word which escapes from his expiring lips is a prayer—"Water! water!"

Sadness and death do not hover only over the great deserts of Sarkha, and Khalata, and Gobi. In happy Hindustan, on the plateau which unites the two arms of the Ghauts, there is many an accursed spot where man is unable to live.

A cold, violent, and ever-cruel wind prevails there. The sun smites you from on high, and the *bise* lashes you, and an icy shudder trembles through you. Sometimes upon these lofty terraces natural fortresses arise, as if to survey surrounding space. In this way leaps from the jet-black earth the tawny Ballary; a conical mountain, bald and shining, which on every side mirrors the sun, and darts back its rays in lightning-flashes. Beneath, the dark Indian town lies in the shadow, an image of life; above, rises the sinister phantom of granite. And it is thus, upon the burning masses, that England, the mistress of India, has planted her strongholds. Thus, that at Ballary, Ghoutz, Gingi, Seringapatam, citadel may be seen towering above citadel, producing the effect of monstrous spiders which, from on high, arrest and fascinate their prey.

But they carry within themselves the invisible enemy which will devour them.

The burning, decomposed air, mixing lower down with the vital emanations from the refuse of vegetation, ceases to nourish life.

It becomes a subtle poison. It wanders, creeps, and penetrates everywhere. Sometimes in its full hypocrisy it seems to abandon the scene. We breathe—we rejoice: it is spring—everything will revive. What a delusion! It has marked this hour as its own; and for food it will seize the most beautiful, the strong, and the young.

"One evening in February we were ranged round a long table in the open air, and by the light of the moon we drank our deep libations. Toasts followed one another every moment, exciting alter-

nately the jest or the approbation of the guests. One of these gay *à propos* produced on the mind a singular impression. A headstrong youth, pouring out a bumper, made us fill our glasses to sanction this strange wish of a rash ambition: 'A bloody war, and an unhealthy season!' This wish, or rather this blasphemy, was soon to be punished.

"In the entire company there were but two thoughtful countenances—my own and young Campbell's. He rose from the table frequently, and each time that he returned the cloud seemed to grow heavier on his brow: I thought I could even detect some slight convulsions. Leaning towards the surgeon of the regiment, who was seated beside me, I whispered in his ear, 'The cholera is in the camp!' The cigar fell from his lips. He and young Campbell left the scene. The doctor alone returned: the word he uttered was a tocsin of alarm which resounded in every heart. Immediately the assembly dispersed.

"The next day we returned to earth the unrecognizable remains of the young and brilliant Scotchman.

"Nothing is grander or more touching than the funeral service in the English army. The whole regiment under arms, and all the officers of the garrison carrying their bare swords reversed under their left arm, follow the corpse to its last resting-place. The band plays the 'Dead March' from the oratorio of 'Saul.' The time is kept by the thunderous notes of the great drum, which makes the air tremble like the report of a cannon. Having arrived at the cemetery, the minister reads that admirable prayer from the Anglican Burial Service, 'In the midst of life we are in death.' Next follow the melancholy words, 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' A few clods are thrown upon the coffin; then—Fire!

"On the wing of the lightning the soul had departed. There lay the first victim; but the terrible scourge had planted its funereal standard on our ramparts. For three long months we saw our companions of the previous evening fall day by day—officers and soldiers, women and children. Daily we joined the gloomy procession, daily repeated the hymns of death; and daily the chorus grew weaker."

## CHAPTER V.

### AT THE FOOT OF THE ALPS: TWO REMINISCENCES.

WHAT a contrast between these fatal deserts and the bland young life of the Alps! What living waters well out at *their* feet! What a soft, sweet sky in the deep delightful nests hidden low down among the mountain-slopes! I have preserved two charming impressions of them; one, of freshness and renovation; the other, and more vivid, that of the little wandering bird which, falling from the icy North into the warm

nature of the South, feels that he has suddenly passed from Winter into Summer.

It was in 1854. We had resided all the winter on the arid coast of Genoa. Our villa, with its orange-groves, was not Paradise. In our rear rose the woodless, gray, and melancholy Apennine, and the dusty highway struck onward to Spezzia. Before us the steel-blue Mediterranean, shining like a mirror in the sun.

My husband was dangerously ill. Alone with him in the profound solitude, I was at once his nurse and physician. All he received came through my hands; through me he was restored to life. But, as frequently happens after great efforts, I, in my turn, was prostrated. We had suffered particularly from the malady of the desert,—from thirst. Nothing was able to quench it. The spectacle of the salt sea added to this torture.

At length the spring returned, and we fled from our Arabia. Between Novi and Alessandria we met with a river, and we sprang into it!

What a change in the landscape! It was not only verdure on the hills, trees in leaf and savoury, and irrigating canals winding across the plains, and in the midst many a monumental grange. But, on looking behind, you saw no more the bare, bald mountains which seemed also to say, "We are athirst." It was the horizon of the Alps, with their mysterious shadows stretching to the West and the North; their infinity, to the East, towards Lombardy. Bare Apennine, adieu!

We arrive at Turin. Nature in this locality is grave and subdued, and the very character of the verdure reminds you that you are not far distant from the austere majesty of the Alps. But it was Spring. In the morning there had been rain, and in all the streets and causeways rose a delightful freshness, and a wholesome smell of earth.

The sun was slightly veiled. After so many months of too much light, this grayish tint, this auspicious sky added to the sweetness of our impressions. Our apartment, engaged in advance, was somewhat gloomy in itself, yet it appeared to us delicious. From the balcony we

saw terraces of verdure rising at each end of the street. We enjoyed, in silence, a lively emotion of happiness.

We thought less of making ourselves at home, than of issuing from the town, and wandering upon the bridge to see the water flow. Our eyes were turned alternately from the river to the green and laughing hills.

After the devouring air of Nervi we could not weary of so charming a spectacle, nor satiate ourselves with seeing the great waters rise and roar beneath the arches. But what charmed us most was the moist air, full of the strength to which we had been so long unaccustomed. Whence came this miracle of freshness?

Next day, on rising to the citadel, we saw the Alps erect before us in all their sublimity. Below, shrouded with the gloom of the firs; on high, white with their pallid snows. They had already caught the breath of May. And everywhere down the green slopes bounded little torrents—living waters which brawled and chattered aloud.

Invariably, every evening, we bent our way towards these meadows. Intermittent rains, broken up by an occasional storm, gave to the first hour of the year an inexpressible charm. On this side, under the eye of the Alps, and already in the shadow, a slight melancholy hovered over the landscape. But it did not sadden us. From the gardens gay with flowers, and the fresh waters descending the mountain, escaped so many

bright promises of life! It was better than the joy of triumphant resurrections. In the peace of eventide, and the penetrating softness of the subdued air, we felt that grave and tranquil Nature, even in her charming revivification, was completely our sister. We felt the seriousness in the smile, the undefinable something of a living and self-contained soul, the *suave austero* which penetrates and binds the heart.

However, on one bright day of June, we felt a desire to mount towards the Light. Beyond the Po there rises, to the right, the Capuchin convent and its celebrated terrace. We felt in ourselves a new birth, so light were we, so active, and so young. Behold us pacing the beautiful esplanade, and watching the river coil and uncoil itself upon the fields. On the horizon, vividly outlined against a heaven of gold, rose the brown and haughty mountains. In the heat of the evening, despite the imposing majesty of the Italian declivities, the scene was truly aërial. Gloomy St. Bernard opposite was lost in a vaporous tint; noble Monte Viso, on the left, seemed to me transfigured. In its shadow and at its feet, our hearts, even more eagerly than our eyes, sought out the cradle of the four Vaudois valleys. Turin sees them rising, in the spring-time, all flooded with light and life; in the autumn sinking, sad and depressed, under the cold glance of the glaciers.

I knew from him who has taught me everything, that in these valleys existed the scanty remains of a small people—poor in the wealth of *this* world, rich in the love of God. Severe Nature had pardoned them, but Man was crueller far. In mid-winter he surprised the feeble tribe, and compelled them to fly in the snows, to abandon their cherished asylum, their nook of earth, watered by the blood of their fathers.

But, in the short intervals of peace they occasionally enjoyed, to these valleys they always returned, unable to live elsewhere.

He told me also of the tender affection of their simple souls for the flowers of their mountains. Flowers of solitude, hidden, like those who loved them, trembling, and fugitive!

In the later winter, when the snow has already fallen, one plant there is which compels itself to endure, and to put forth its flowers. Women, children, even men are unable to watch its struggles without their hearts being touched by pity. It is bitter cold, and the flower is naked, with no leaf to shelter it. It trembles in the wind, this poor Fridouline (the "little chilly one"); a sharper breath of winter on the morrow would smite it dead.

But, on this luminous evening, why grow sad or think of death? The great river descending towards us from yon valleys pours its freshness into our souls. The rich Italian country-side which it waters tells us, in its strong and living verdure, that thence comes its fertility.

Even when the day had fallen, and the shadow concealed me from the little nook on which my eyes so long had rested, I felt that under the Alps,—those grand bereaved and mourning widows,—was hidden a reservoir of Life.

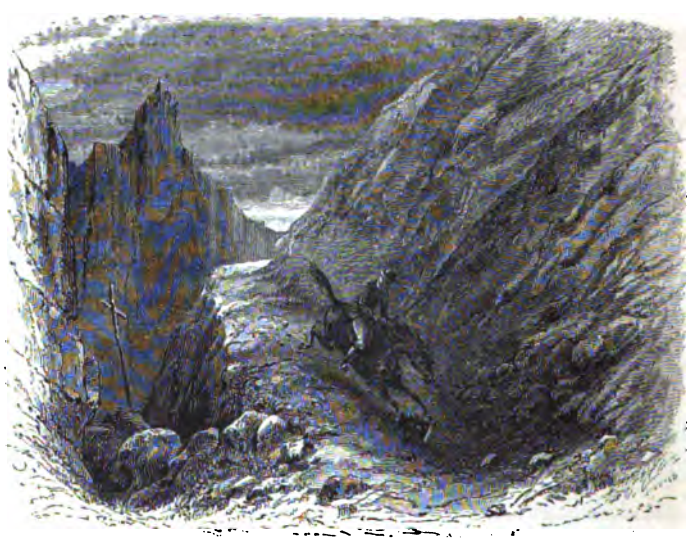
My second, and very different, impression dates from 1867. At the end of July we quitted Pontresina, a sad and serious village in the Upper Engadine. It was not yet summer, but a variable and fantastic spring,—mixed with sunshine, snow, and hail,—the squalls of March, but very much keener. Every day we had kept our stove alight.

At nine in the morning, the air was dry, keen, and raw. The gallop of the horses rendered the cold more sensible. We followed the course of the lakes scattered between the Maloggia and St. Moritz. At this early hour they were all in a ripple, and their green waters shone with no reflection of the sky. However, there was a certain amount of softness in the lakes of St. Moritz and of Silva Plana, with their belts of larch-trees. We felt less keenly the rigour of a locality where the waters are frozen to the bottom. But how serious the scene on the lake of Sils! In its gray waters, under the cold glance of the Bernina, it clearly reveals the true spirit, the austerity, of the country. Upon its banks there were no low green meadows, enamelled with gentians; but white and barren rocks, barren in spite of the season. This gloomy offspring of the mountain, captured, re-captured every year, without a moment to recover its life,—to concentrate a little heat;

to awaken a blade of grass, or even a lichen,—seemed gloomier, deadlier than death itself.

We proceeded towards Italy, and in the lengthened corridor which we followed up, we felt the cold more sharply than at our starting-place. The lake, little by little, grew shallower, and was covered with reeds. The wind blew more strongly, the landscape exhibited a greater desolation. We arrived at the *col* of the Maloggia. There was no place of shelter but a poor posting-house for relays; and no landlord but the storm. It seemed a kind of cross-way, where adverse spirits had come to seek and struggle with us.

The Maloggia is a table-land of black rocks, polished and chiselled by the work of the ancient glaciers. They slip under the traveller's feet, as he wishes to survey down below, at the bottom (as it were) of a funnel, the narrow valley of Breggaglia which leads into Lombardy. A dizzy descent of twelve hundred feet, which one descends as in a



dream. There is no means of checking your course; let those beware who are climbing upwards! The postilion winds his horn to alarm all the echoes of the valley.

We had scarcely quitted the frozen shoulder of the Maloggia, and lo! the waters of which one saw so little in the Engadine, upon the slope which we suddenly descended, showed themselves everywhere, and broke out into voice, as if happy in their escape from winter. Under these waters, and under the warm vapours which rose from below, the whole mountain was alive with flowers. It is a curious fact that the verdure of the trees, instead of growing brighter, grew much darker. We left the pleasant greenness of the larch for the dark foliage of the fir. At the same time, we gained for our roadside companion the wild Mera. Glassy, like all snow-fed torrents, her wanderings amused us; her pale willows became her well.

It is scarcely noon; we are still four thousand feet above the sea-level, and we are already troubled by the warmth.

Every tongue is let loose. We are five travellers in all, and each in his own way enjoys the feeling of revival. Those most melancholy on the heights above are now the gayest. But the true mountaineer mingles some regrets with his farewells to the lofty peaks.

Behold us now descended to *Vico Soprano*, which is the true frontier of the two countries. The women here are already Italians; and many things are Italian also. Never were we merrier; never more inclined to enjoy life. We enchant our host; a feat which secures us an excellent breakfast.

Nature also favoured us with a cordial welcome. We discovered the most enchanting landscapes all around us. The chestnuts began to show themselves; the vines, as yet untrained,—true wreaths of lianas,—floated about the way. On the flanks of the mountain, above a wild and narrow gorge, crumbled the ruins of an ancient feudal manor-house. At our feet,—a tenderer image,—the great rosy epilolias diversified the banks of the Mera. The valley was narrower, and once more we descended, passing through a superabundant vegetation.

Eastward, the azure of the sky grew deeper and yet deeper. To the south-west, towards Chiavenna, brooded an approaching storm; we knew we should be there in the evening. But all the villages we were traversing told us that it was just mid-day. In each it seemed

as if life were nothing but a holiday, spent in the open air, or under these natural caverns which were shadowed by mulberry-trees, and time-old chestnuts, heroically anchored in the rock. Beneath their paternal shadow, the garden and the meadow flourished as in spring. These were the dancing-halls of the villagers. What a contrast with those mourning-solitudes where we had not encountered a human face,—neither at Célerina, nor elsewhere,—even in the recess of the deep and narrow window, to bestow upon us even a farewell glance!

One only of these villages recalls a mournful memory,—the *Village des Pleurs*, the well-named "Village of Tears." Upon a mass of ruins fell a cascade wearily. One night the mountain, weary also, glided with all its bulk into the valley, burying nearly two thousand inhabitants. Under their immense funereal monument, a cromlech of stones some sixty feet high, they sleep, as if never to be stirred to life again, their last sleep. In any other locality, and among the mists and vapours, such a scene would be most melancholy; and even here, in the warm living light of the South, Nature cannot keep from mourning. Upon the accumulated rocks a young existence has quickly arisen, which has veiled even death and ruin with a tender smile.

We comprehend more thoroughly the abruptness of the descent

when we enter Chiavenna, and see ourselves confined on every side by mountainous precipices. It is just as if we lay at the bottom of a well. If it were not for the way in which the climbing and creeping vines conceal and dispel the peril, it would be impossible to live there in security.

We were at last in Italy. The humblest houses were painted with frescoes. A ruined castle, associated with many legends, was reverenced there, and carefully preserved. The church had its campanile and its cloister, where the comedy of death is played out. In all other places, its formidable mystery would be hidden in the shadow. Here it finds a pleasure in displaying itself,—not, indeed, in its austere remains (*dépouille*), which are often beautiful with a tragic beauty, but in all kinds of fantastic representations which are intended to affright you.

And to these it adds certain "In Memoriams," and gloomy warnings to the passer-by: *Oggi son vivo e domani morto* (To-day we live, and to-morrow we die); *Voi sare te in sepoltura come noi* (Soon shalt thou be in the grave, like us). But is it an effect of this Italian sky, so rich on its own account in promises, that the eyes find a pleasure in contemplating these funereal images, the soul cannot lose its serenity? It escapes from those false fascinations which would link its living spirit to the tomb. It enters into death, believing only in life.

The storm broke. For the sake of breathing, we went towards the Mera. Over the rocks upset by its sudden fits of wrath, it bounded rapidly, flinging its freshness towards the balconies of the palaces, on which some Italian beauties were reclining. But the scene was not really fair,—the waters were invariably gray; the interior of the town was sadly neglected.

I experienced, however, an indescribable charm in wandering in these narrow streets, without thinking or seeing, but in a delightful reverie. How truly it was Italy! On every side I caught the sound of songs, sometimes barbarous in execution, but always with the accent

of a soul of the South. I heard them again; one voice especially, which all night mingled with the storm.

The following day, the awakening was delicious. One went to and fro, with casements open, and feet bare. What had become of the severities of the preceding day! Under the chestnuts and weeping vines, upon the overthrown rocks, above the savage Liro, wandered among the goats some beautiful children very thinly clad. A short distance off two youths were conversing, still affected by the storm. I saw them without being seen; and I saw the Italian glance and smile, the Italian grace and fire. A Canova, more living, and quite as gentle!

## CHAPTER VI.

### NEAR AND AFAR.—MOUNTAIN-ECHOES.

At the grave gathering of the mountains we should never look from too close a point of view. The regions where Nature plants her great mysterious laboratories were not made for man. It seems as if, after awhile, the livid eye of the glaciers exercises upon him its shadowy fascination. It is tempted to fathom the deep night of the yawning crevasses which open under his feet.

Hostile to the intruder they appear, when thus beheld; still more hostile to themselves. Crouching like so many pale phantoms in their shroud of ice, or reared erect in naked peaks, wild and storm-scathed, they present a harsh contrast: death without peace—fatal immobility in full convulsion.

Those descending ice-masses, ploughed with furrows—that long procession of black boulders crushing down the glacier—yonder sudden gatherings of gigantic waves, surprised in their assault, and instantly

congealed—the abysses hollowed by their inner spasms—the river-like impetuosity which rushes forward irresistibly, and yet does not move,—what is the whole but a pathetic image of the elemental war, of furious action blended with stupor? Nothing witnesses here to the calm, beneficent laws which Nature offers. I seek in vain, at the depth of the sombre vision, the God of Peace who regulates and pacifies the forces of the world.

Let us quickly retire.

At a distance the harmony of the magnificent landscape is seen in all its sublime simplicity. Graceful or majestic, each summit stands alone in its sovereign beauty. At eve, bathed in the golden rain of the sunset, they dart aloft, and seem to spread their wings above us. Born of the Night—of the slow, profound sigh and deep aspiration of Earth—would not one rather call them daughters of the Heaven, of the genial light which encircles them with a divine aureole?

Thus, lofty and serene, and adorned with an immortal smile, appeared to me, when I first beheld them, my beautiful Pyrenees. From the bottom of the valley, in the rising dawn of a glorious day, I saw them suddenly start out from the inexpressible azure of the heaven: nothing but the summits—the whiteness of their snows, the rosy gleams of the Morning which they saw approaching.

Almost a child again, I draw near in solitude the great Unknown. I bore with me as a viaticum the bitter fruits of premature sorrow. Already the future had less charm for me than the past. Before I knew what life *was*, I had no love but for memories.

Nothing is better than quick surprises. It was a glorious awakening. My young heart escaped from me to meet those beautiful virgins of light; and in that lively impulse it seemed to me that I ascended higher and still higher.

Ever since, when, through the mists of the lower world and the treacherous shadows of the way, I would steady my steps and preserve the serenity of my soul, I have looked towards that luminous vision and found my help in God.

He who lives always at the bottom of the mountain—in the deep valley, and in full face of it—never sees it thus. Most frequently it is nothing for him but a temptation and a danger.

For long years it was considered inaccessible; but Man was born for its conquest. If he did not mount its acclivities, if he did not attain its summit, if he did not tread under foot its inviolate crown, it would be by night and day his evil genius. The crashing of the glacier, which is broken up by its own weight,—the thunder of the avalanches pealing around,—seem to him its voices of defiance, of haughty irony.

If you would know what passes within its heart, look when it thinks itself alone. Observe that masculine but singular physiognomy; that eye which has a glance so singular. At moments some lurid lights pass across its face. It is almost dumb. Its days of wild, unbroken joy are those when it prepares to measure itself with some new peak, which it hopes to crush under its feet. It will go; do not doubt it. It will return a conqueror; but though it returns, even under its laughter you will find the troubled mask. This is not a tranquil possession. It has been happy to-day: will it be so to-morrow, and for ever?

The climber from the plains, when one victory has been secured, starts on his errand in a belief that the roads are open, and that the danger is conquered. But his guide is very well aware that the conditions are never the same; that, in its apparent fixity, nothing is more perfidious than this green-eyed glacier—that innocent snow, concealing the gulf only to insure more completely your destruction.

All this he knows, because he has too often seen the danger in his perilous ascents; and yet more, perhaps, in the dreams of the long winter nights, in the obscurity of days rendered heavy by shadowy mists. Immobility is the evil spirit of the mind, which, if it do not create for itself imaginary worlds, will contemplate the power of gloomy realities. What in the summer will be that *mer de glace*, which is now lying so smoothly under its white winter mantle? What will be done with these melted, regelated snows, alternately

water and ice, during the great and uncertain labour of the spring, when the night unmakes what the day has made? When shall he attack it this year? From below he looks towards certain imperceptible black points which he alone has noted. These are some chamois-tracks, by which the summits may be gained at an earlier date than is possible in any other way. The ridge which they creep along is as sharp as a razor, and on either side lies the abyss. This, however, is the route which he will follow. He knows beforehand that it is the only practicable passage. Other peaks, accessible last season, will not be so in the present year. Before the theories of science, he has discovered the mysterious transformations of the glacier, and has been the first to mark the slow work of Time. He has watched the glacier on its march towards the valley. But this is not sufficient; he would fain penetrate the causes. There the derision of his enemy awaits him. His foot is firm, his glance without dizziness; and yet how his mind totters, how intelligence itself escapes him, if he seeks to master the laws of the active forces which he has dominated!

In Engadine, at the entrance to the colossal world of ice, more than one intrepid mountaineer, after scaling every summit, has been known to lose his senses in front of the enigma. On a certain evening he returns: he has gained the desired knowledge; the glacier has no longer any secrets from him, and nothing was more simple. He goes on talking. A strange laughter impedes his speech; but his gestures, his glances, speak with only too sinister an eloquence. The poor wretch has left his reason on the peak of Roseg or Morteratsch.

And yet, as we have said, the Engadine is not a land of mystery; there is nothing in it to dizzy one's brain. The vast plateau of the Grisons has raised its valleys so high that here the very peaks are within reach of the eye. The paler light—the keen, pungent air—the smooth turf, enamelled with rhododendrons—the forests of arollas—and, below, the shuddering bells of the Linnée,—alone reveal the great elevation at which we have arrived.

Here the glaciers, in spite of their enormous height, are by no means menacing. From almost imperceptible declines, they glide into the valleys. One may sometimes walk for an hour as on a field of

snow. Morteratsch and many others terminate here in lofty cliffs, a true wall of ice. The heat is not able to mark it deeply, to chisel it into arcades, to hew out magic grottoes. The morning sun looks upon the mighty wall without illuminating it. Through its very grandeur, this appears less grand.

The Oberland, or rather the vestibule of Monte Rosa, is the region of perturbing mirages, because there the mountain overcomes you with impressive surprises. There sink deep the narrow corridors, the deep gorges dive precipitously, the passes are ominous with sepulchral gleams —sometimes nothing but a gully hollowed by the assault of a torrent. Much lower down, under the funereal gloom of the firs, one hears it roaring harshly: it is contending with the rock which obstructs its path.

Is he who goes there alone in every season—in the summer with his herd, in the winter to fell the pine-trees—confident of heart? At his feet, the escarpment of the precipices; over his head, the great dumb gray or

white sphynxes, reared aloft like so many phantoms. At a distance down below, quite in the bottom of the ravine, they seem to support the firmament and close up the world. By a winding path the glacier descends, and with a jolting motion.

Everywhere around us lie the gloomy sadnesses. Upon the *débris* which it has left, a few poor stunted larches struggle in vain to grow. Half alive, half dead, tottering on the moraine, they undergo the eternal oppression of the keen wind of the mountain-peaks. The deserted rocks, frozen to the heart for tens of thousands of centuries, cannot recover their former being. The light does its best to revive them, and bids them awaken and flourish: they lie dead for hundreds of centuries more—vast cemeteries of stones, more gloomy than a cemetery of bones.

And at such elevations the water of the lake is never seen again. That glaucous or gloomy water is *not* water—not the water which marches onward, which flows, full of life, to expand at a distance into a noble river. Under the menace of icebergs and crumbling avalanches, how sullen it looks! Too cold, too wild to be tenanted by any finny denizens, it rarely enlivens its banks with a little verdure. The flower hesitates to trust its fragile life so close to the frozen pall.

The mountaineer both loves and dreads the avalanches. In spring he watches them closely, to anticipate their savage action. Then, when their time has passed, his mountain suddenly appears to him less living. It has resumed its great silence, its solemn immobility. Its peaks stand out defined against the sky; and the bluish vapours and light clouds, floating obliquely at their mid-height, invest them in a supernatural grandeur. If he did not hear lower down the bells of the herdless cows, Nature would become too powerful for him; he would grow weak in so mute a colloquy. The silence oppresses his mind more heavily than the solitude.

If the mountain would but speak! It has not the thunderous voice of the avalanche, and his own awakens but a feeble echo; yet

that distant voice which lower down responds to him, is it not the voice of one beloved—of his friend perhaps, of his wife or child? The superstitious Valaysian, more troubled with fears, seldom ventures on more than a brief and wild *hurrah!* The shepherd of the Oberland, roaming over his grassy meadows, converses more willingly with the mountain. He modulates his note, and sustains it so long as he can hold his breath. He hurls it forth, that it may rebound, and return to him from the ravine in a constant vibration. But whatever he does, his young and masculine voice will not penetrate to the very end of the defile whence the haughtiest summits regard him. Who shall make all these giants speak?—who shall awaken them from their sleep?—Who?

The true son of the mountain—he who, having sprung from it, shelters it in his turn,—the fir!

Felled to the ground, pierced from head to root, yet see how it agitates the echoes! Not like the horn of Roland—the grand brazen voice which made all earth re-echo from Harboré to the Maladetta—but like the long trumpet, with its grave and deep notes, full of protracted sighs. Slowly they penetrate the long defiles. They moan: it is the plaint of the mountain, and not its defiance. The Alpine peasant, without using much effort to explain it to his own spirit, loves to make it human; just as if it were this which reässures and softens his heart.

At times he subdues the sounds: they languish—they droop—they die!

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE RUINS.

THE great geographer Karl Ritter, who comprehends so fully the laws of the world, gives utterance to this melancholy prophecy: "Among the great mountain-spaces some will disappear; the heights will be lowered, the passes will be multiplied."

Ramond, at the close of the eighteenth century, counting the dead of the great human revolution and his own wounds, sought for his confidante and consoler the profound solitude of the Pyrenees: "So many irreparable losses bewailed in the bosom of Nature." Where would he have found a friend more compassionate, or more like himself? She, too, had known losses, and was able to say: "What are *thy* ruins compared with mine? Whatever dies or perishes here, I shall never again re-create. If near the heavens to-day, where will my mighty mountain be to-morrow?" The foot of man strikes against the *débris;* and all around him he thinks he sees ruins.

And sometimes they are so desolate, so dull! The atom itself no longer vibrates. Who has not encountered the lapiaz of the Alps, of the Jura, and upon their emaciated surface seen fantastic figures grimacing? The crystalline limestones leave, as they disappear, innumerable cells in the stones, like a mournful hive of sterility.

In the heights we see the Witches' Cemeteries, which no shepherd dares approach. On this side he has raised inclosures to defend his flock. If, in the night, in the mist, or in the storm, his beasts should go astray, how would he ever regain them? In spite of the prohibition of his pastor or his curé that he should not believe in evil spirits or in ghosts, he knows well enough what he has seen at nightfall. In yonder cemetery the dead do not lie quiet. The safest plan is to keep at a distance from these accursed localities.

Some are desolate; others are strange and fantastic,—magic cities, built by giants, who have left them their bones.

Humboldt, in his journey to the foot of the Altaï, in the plain of Siberia—that low and dreary level—suddenly saw rising from the ground a Roman city, several leagues in extent. Everything was there: the Forum, the curule chairs, the encircling walls, the arenas, the religious monuments, the towers and their belfries apart; and there, as everywhere, the image of death by the side of life—funereal stones or triumphal obelisks of five hundred feet in height.

On the other side of the Altaï, near the tawny desert of Sarkha, the traveller Atkinson found himself, as if by magic, at the entrance of a town built entirely of sombre red granite. In the midst of the limitless steppes, nothing could be devised more fitted to impress the mind. In this colossal city no ruin was less than eight hundred feet in height. Isolated pillars, shafts of broken columns, walls pierced with loopholes, and all around it military defensive works. The nomade tribes shrink from these weird ruins, which, they say, are numerous on the immense Asiatic plateau. They hold them in superstitious horror. Terrified and beside themselves, they shrunk from Atkinson while he took a sketch of this dreaded place: they expected to see the spirits descend from on high to strike and punish him.

But the great image of the deserted city is to be found in the New World, in the midst of the prairies of the Far West: it is gradually disappearing with the bison,—the sole remaining relic of a powerful race, which merited a better fate. Ruins with ruins! There, over an immense area of North America, stretches an infinity of herbage, where the horizon is only defined by the curvature of the earth. Suddenly,

without any warning, the ground sinks—descends into an immense cirque, two hundred feet in depth. All vegetation dies; the soil has the whiteness of snow, or the dull gray of feeble, ruinous stones, except where the iron-ore lends them its rich tawny colour. Such is the scene of the *Mauvaises Terres*,—the desert of Nebraska.

One might rather call it a dead city, twenty leagues long by fifteen broad. "From the prairie the traveller sees beneath tens of thousands of rocks like columns, capped with pyramids. These towers, two hundred feet in height, prevent him from wandering in the narrow passages of labyrinths, which resemble the irregular streets and wynds of some fantastic medieval cities. At a distance these columns resemble massive monuments, to which neither flying buttresses, nor turrets, nor vaulted portico, nor façades, nor slender pinnacles are wanting. It is just as if one were approaching some prodigious city of giants, where Labour and Genius have bequeathed to the Future a multitude of masterpieces for imitation.

"Elsewhere one meets with two rival cities, separated by a profound valley. Each is fortified, and girt round with ramparts. The gates affording entrance to the city are protected by advanced forts. Above, a human form seems to watch over the whole,—the vigilant sentinel, prompt to give the alarm."—(*Simonin-Girardin.*)

If you descend into the deserted city—whither a colonnade two hundred feet high conducts you—the illusion gives way to the reality, and the magic picture disappears. But in its place is something far more prodigious. You find yourself in a field of tombs! And what? Not of bisons, wolves, bears, the present denizens of the savannah; but —a sight never seen elsewhere—all the beasts belonging to the Eocene formation of the Tertiary period: the progenitors of the Siberian mammoth and the mighty mastodon. What a revelation! These bones are a witness that the young America, which aged Asia from the crest of her Himalaya looked upon as her daughter, is by many ages the elder!

When this antique fauna was pasturing on the prairies, a part of the Old World was sleeping beneath the waters; and when the Hima-

laya and the Alps arose, these guests of the antique world were already buried, having supplied the age which could furnish them with sufficient land.—(*Owen.*) But an enigma still remains. How account for such an accumulation of remains? Was it not from the basin of the Upper Missouri, as from that of the Ohio—profoundly undermined and filled with caverns, into which is diverted a portion of the waters of the Mississippi?—(*Tomassy.*) Here the vaulted roof of the cavern would fall in as the result of its gradual attrition, but at an epoch when, the waters having already subsided from this basin, the animals were able to make their retreat from the cavities of the soil. The strange sculptures must have been partly made by the subterranean waters.

If I have spoken of the majestic ruins of Nature in her loneliness, it is to bear witness to the gentle slowness of her processes. Her action is never abrupt and savage. She has not created, in order to crush her creation. To all that issues from her bosom she gives protection; to the Earth, her child, she has given all things: the grass in the plains; on the mountain-slopes, the dense mantle of the pines; and, higher still, the vast shroud of snow and ice. Yonder frosty masses, which have seemed to us to bristle with so much hostility, are the true guardians of the mountains. She loves them—she calls upon them; she would gladly clothe them, and defend them from the attacks of destroying elements. The mountains which are not isolated in sublime peaks are rendered secure by their solidity. In the Engadine, where only the peak of Bernina raises its head above the *névés*, as if to watch over the land, the ruins are but few. All the other peaks, buried and hidden, can guard themselves; and the moraines obtain from them but little aliment.

If, lower down, the arollas and the larch-trees had not been destroyed, the lofty valleys of the Grisons would smile in all their youth, unmarked by any trace of Time.

Man has been quicker than Nature. It is true that he has not been able to attack the glacier openly, nor the *névé* of the summits;

but he has waged against them a surer war, by striking at that which, born of the mountain, comes in its turn to support and aid it.

They are made for one another—they have seen the same revolutions of the globe; and the weak have resisted them more surely than the strong.

To the east of the Cordilleras, from Bolivia to Chili, but there only, sit enthroned to-day the araucarias of the antique ages. They have defended their beloved mountain from the day when the latter first rose out of the ocean-depths. Revered guests, who render much more than they receive! You can conceive of nothing more steadfast than these resinous heroes.

Men speak of them as inferior creatures, which continue to us the infancy of the vegetable world. And what matters it? In their sublime inferiority they come to us from the depth of triumphant ages of youth and life. Nature loves such workers.

Undoubtedly for all the law is fatal. The hour which rings in a birth will with the same cadence ring out a death.

The *névé* will swoop down from the loftiest summits; the glaciers on their road towards the valleys will grow impoverished and disappear; the bare head of the mountains, one day or other, will be given up to destruction: but without violence, and without haste; by the slow and harmonious equilibrium of the forces of life and death.

It is the weakest and most conscious of the sons of Earth who betrays her before her time.

I have never revisited without pain our old, bare, withered, and ruined Pyrenees, which even in their wreck are still sublime. It is not Nature which has so quickly changed their face, precipitated their *gaves* in furious torrents, diverted their lakes, and let loose at a blow their noble reservoirs, raising one above the other in magnificent amphitheatres.

The malice of man is everywhere visible in the ruin. Having found the axe too slow, he has made use of fire; and to the glaciers on high it has seemed as if the flames were once more rekindling in, and ascending from, the extinct volcanoes.

The snows of this immense chain, being no longer supported by those intrepid combatants the woods, have given way, and the great rampart has yielded throughout its entire length. The waters of lakes expanded by the snows from above have weighed upon their dykes: the dykes have given way—everything has been swept downward; the torrent alone has remained master. Everywhere the breaches are opened wider than the breach which Roland cleft with his sword Durandal. All the cirques—those beautiful, and deep, and lucent lakes—have dried up. And now the Southern sun, and the heat and the cold, rage at their will. The trees, ever partial to humidity—the poor firs—when once the rapid melting of the snows is completed, feel themselves burned up. You see them, unwilling to rise, and shrinking closely to the earth. They pine away before dying, before disappearing like their mountain.

Thus bereft, it has three enemies. The water, which freezes and thaws alternately in the smallest fissures, and so breaks up the rock. The subtle, sharp, or burning air, which bites into and penetrates everything, makes and unmakes the mineral combinations, and divides the atoms. Upon these atoms descend the storms—the sudden and irresistible storms of the Pyrenees and Cordilleras. The whole gives way; boulders are detached, and roll in every direction; the dust

and water are converted into cataracts of mud. You think that the entire mountain is crumbling into ruin before your eyes.

Who would believe that the granites, porphyrys, and basalts which issued from the fire are the most easily attacked? In truth, they are but an aggregation. The air divides, and the water carries away, the cement which bound their particles together: their eternity is at an end. The black Maladetta, that daughter of the Fire, has yielded sooner than the son of the Ocean, Morboré.

So likewise in the Alps, the loftiest peaks—those which detach themselves from the sky in their solitary sublimity—will the most quickly accomplish Carl Ritter's prophecy.

I think of the Matterhorn, that giant of giants, rising to a Titanic elevation in the Monte Rosa chain. He who first dared to ascend it—the illustrious Tyndall—contemplating it from below, recognized the haughty and terrible peak as "too high in heaven to see a son of the earth endeavouring to scale its virgin summit." But the haughtiest are the most vulnerable. Looking at it again, you see how gloomy it is, how truly an image of eternal desolation. That black ridge, which plunges upon the village of Breuil, consists of frightful towers and sombre bastions, which seem to defend the giant from daring enterprise. In the direction of Italy it exhibits a precipitous wall, to which nothing can cling. On high, it pierces the firmament with its pyramid. Summit beloved of the storm, how many times has the lightning visited thee,—has burned and vitrified thee with its fires!

Who will dare, after having escaladed yonder towers, to set foot upon that shining mirror? Tyndall was the first to venture, but was stayed before he could reach the crown. The danger arose, not only from the bastions which had to be taken in flank, and from the steep and rapid acclivities, but from their instability, and from the rain of stones which, in their descending course, struck against each block and boulder, and set them in motion. Others followed, dragged onwards in successive falls. All night, and every minute, sheltered by a projecting crag, he heard the rattling rain. In the morning the peak appeared to him as if it had been gnawed and parcelled out, and given

up to all the destroying agents which waged war upon its flanks of granite.

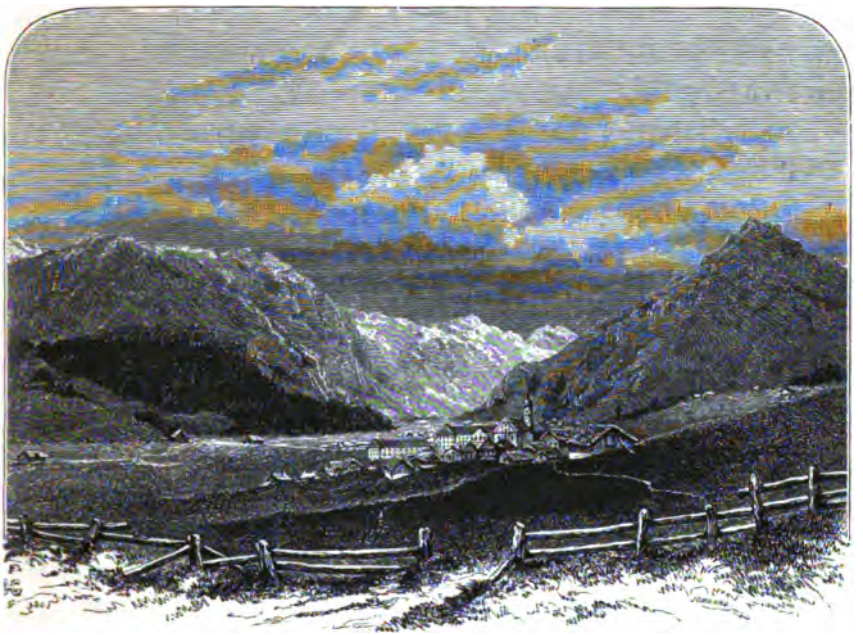
When he returned to it—and this time to conquer—the world had been stirred by a terrible adventure. The gloomy spirit of the Matterhorn had been appeased: he had received his first victims.

Tyndall, planting his foot on the ruined peak, does not despair. He will affirm that the world is young, and Nature always in travail. She builds and demolishes, raises and casts down; she hurries, through eternal changes, towards a rest which she will never attain. Rest never—action ever! O glorious promise! Nothing, then, will be ruin in a wholly metamorphosed Nature.

We do but pass across the earth, we, less durable than the

ephemera of an evening, compared to its prolonged existence. The sentiment, the feeling of its slow resurrection, sometimes escapes us. Do not turn your gaze too often towards the aged world which carries us; let us rather bend it towards that grand Southern Sea which seems to overspread all things with the immensity of its waters. *There* is Nature's great laboratory, where she incessantly bids new lives to be. Ere long innumerable islands will rise into the light; and to-morrow, continents.

To the prophecy of Ritter replies the voice of Holy Writ:—"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low." (Isa. xl. 4.)



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MEDICINAL INFLUENCE OF THE UPPER VALLEYS—SAINT GERVAIS—ENGELBERG.

WHEN, leaving behind us the heavy mists of the plain, we mount to the upper valleys (those most congenial to humanity are situated at an elevation of from three thousand to four thousand feet), we experience a singular relief. Without fatigue the respiration is quickened, the pulse beats more rapidly; the mirth which flows with the blood is fired at first, perhaps, by a little intoxication.

The air which we breathe in these lofty regions seems to expand our existence. To its purity and its lightness it adds transparency; so that, in certain countries, it opens up a truly infinite horizon. In the coast-range of the Andes, at Quito, Humboldt saw distinctly, from a distance of eight leagues, his friend, Monsieur de Bonpland, climbing the acclivities of Chimborazo.

At an elevation of three thousand feet we feel much lighter of

spirit; we could carry at least three thousand pounds more upon our shoulders; we feel relieved of that great burden which so weighed upon and oppressed our life, that the weak and the convalescent were ever pale and troubled. Here, in the elastic atmosphere, the blood comes voluntarily to the light, and offers itself to its influence. And the light colours and reddens it, just as it turns green the leaf. That warmth is not indispensable, is shown at these heights by numerous chilly plants. You may see them, through no other agency than that of the light, springing up vigorously, and flourishing with a magical splendour.

After certain diseases, which eat into the frame and so refine it as to leave only the soul and the sentiment, we do wrong in seeking the sea-side. With its regular pulsations, regular but so powerful,—with its ever vibrating air, vibrating even in the calm,—it over-stimulates that nervous life which requires to be subdued. It continues the pleasing tyranny which makes one think one is strong. In reality we live *double*, and wear ourselves out. It is only a factitious strength, a nervous agitation, which, on our return, gives way. We feel that we are in no degree recruited, that we have brought back only a great capacity for suffering.

The Alps offer a milder and surer means of cure. Pointing to the four corners of the world, they are, on a small scale, an image of the whole earth and of its varied climates. In themselves they possess everything which renews life: tranquillity, young verdure, a pure and nourishing air, the delicious freshness which on every side the living springs diffuse, cascades, lakes, and light invisible vapours, which mingle their soft moisture in the atmosphere.

I have always looked upon our young Alps, set in the heart of ancient Europe, as a source of renewal. Afar from ocean, they hold suspended another and more human ocean. The air which comes to us has circulated over the meads, through the forests, and in the valleys. It brings from them and their flowers an undefinable perfume of air and radiance.

In speaking of the Mountain, I do not advise for the feeble either

those broad open valleys, which are so many arenas for contending winds to display their force, or those narrower ravines which lie under the oppression of the glaciers. In these the air is raw and lifeless; the currents are cold, and often deadly.

No; I would prefer one of those intermediate valleys, sheltered and tranquil, where everything tended to the reparation of physical energy, and the skilful amelioration of a too dominant nervous life.

Shall we ascend to Saint Gervais? It appears to me very enticing. Imagine in a grave and austere region the most charming *corbeilles* in the world. Woods, and flower-enamelled leas, and orchards.

The traveller who, in the morning, journeys from Geneva to Chamounix, through the valley of Sallenches, sees from below Saint Gervais suspended to its ravine, and hovering in the sunlit mist. How fresh, green, and laughing it appears in the laughing light!

On reaching it the landscape appears infinitely varied, sometimes sweet and amiable, sometimes full of grandeur. At first the eye ranges over one grand prospect. Quite at the bottom of a valley, whose declivities are somewhat abrupt, we make out Saint Gervais and its Baths, shut up in a basin, as it were, of some six hundred feet in depth. It opens, however, on the vast and melancholy valley of Sallenches.

Both behind and before the village is drawn, so to speak, a curtain of verdure; two lengthy mountain-ridges, uniform and well-wooded. At one of its extremities, beyond the valley of Sallenches, are planted the proud gray towers of Varan. In opposition, at the other end, Montjoie erects itself in all the blackness of its slaty cliffs. But little of its gloom can Saint Gervais discern from its nest of foliage. It does not reveal itself to the traveller coming from this direction until, after a considerable interval, he reaches the angle of the low road which runs in a hollow at its foot, and, through the gloomy and savage gorge of Notre Dame, leads you into Italy. Already, on the way, Contamines lies very desolate. Its torrent flows, with many a bend and turn, over a deep black soil. The muddied alders stoop

beneath the weight of their ill-fortune. With all its verdure, and trees, and even with its flocks, the scene, if the sun should be hidden, appears entirely lifeless.

From this sombre village look around, and on the right you will see, across the torrent, the ruined and fissured Montjoie, crumbling into decay. To the left, half hidden under lazy vapours, three or four glaciers descend, as if they would swoop down upon us.

We feel a pleasure in revisiting the maternal tenderness of Saint Gervais. But we return there warned. It has not too much to boast of. Behind the curtain of Prarion, which defends it on the east, does not a pale white head rise above it, and would fain look in upon it? That is MONT BLANC.

Let us climb the Prarion, and follow up its lengthened ridge. What an unexpected picture becomes visible on the other side! It resembles a vast graveyard, covered with an immense shroud of white, underneath which are discernible funereal monuments, and sombre pinnacles, and pyramids of granite.

In spite of yourself, after this sudden vision, you always turn in the same direction. You are fascinated, so to speak. In the evening, or rather at sunset, the snows are transiently lit up and kindled, and compel your gaze with their magic beauty. The fire wanes. You love to contemplate them for those expiring gleams which harmonize so appropriately with the nightfall. The gleams die out; the snow, in contrast with the lustre of a summer-sky, assumes a sepulchral white, and next a dull leaden gray. And still we gaze.

When a storm of rain is approaching, we become suddenly aware of a cold raw feeling in the atmosphere, and we know its cause.

The poor invalid, who, arriving here only yesterday, has not yet had time to put herself into harmony with the mountain, nor to recover from her long exhaustion, feels her hope deceived, and her small vitality apparently failing still. Must she ascend? Or should she seek a lower position?

To develop and expand her energies, she must seek a place of

more equable temperature, rich in visions and contrasts, but truly human.

In the heart of Switzerland, in the canton of Unterwald, and near Saint Gothard, we have discovered this wished-for scene of peace, where Nature seems to lay aside her activity—the lofty valley of Engelberg. The winds never blow there, except, occasionally, the Fœhn; and the Fœhn is not so terrible at Engelberg as in the Uri valley. It passes over it at night in great billows, which seem to rock and cradle you. The strong slumber soundly, the weak are lost in a half dreamy state, and enjoy in their peacefulness something that is sweeter than sleep.

The approach to Engelberg, however, gives no promise of this tranquillity. Stanz, our starting-point, seated on its reedy lake, is a complete caldron of storms, whither all the vapours hasten to concentrate. All around it the walnut-trees extend their shadow. We arrived there one oppressive afternoon, when the air was loaded with electricity, and we felt ourselves immediately depressed and agitated.

The next day we gladly took leave of Stanz and its mists, and soon began to ascend. In the heavy rain the road was difficult, but very picturesque. It winds through the depths of the forest, just as if it were hung to the flanks of the mountain, which starts up precipitously from the torrent below, whose roar is plainly audible, and whose foam and bounding tide we can see through the fir-trees.

Gloom upon gloom, the scene was melancholy; but we bethought ourselves how delightful it would be on sunny days. On either side of the road the earth was red, and the air balmy with wild strawberries.

At noon, by following up a winding route, which apparently wished to keep the higher valley, we arrived at Engelberg. At first sight you are scarcely impressed, except by the beautiful greenness of the hills. Above the meadows, on the lowest slopes of the mountain, some broad-foliaged trees—the ash, the beech, and the sycamore—define a very agreeable horizon. From the entrance to the village we could see neither the bottom of the valley, nor its monastery. The village first

appeared; and the bell of its little chapel sounded for us the *Angelus*. The scene was calm and melancholy. The vapours of Stanz had ascended with us, but were no longer oppressive and stormy. They retained only a genial warmth.

In the mountain daylight nothing at a distance was visible, but all seemed concentrated in one point. Gradually I felt creeping over me a certain inner tranquillity.

In the evening I started off on my first ramble. The day declined; the valley slept on its fair expanse of lea. In the middle rose the monastery, a wealthy Benedictine abbey. Brooks welled out in every direction, and softly made their way towards the low and solitary Aa.

I could distinguish nothing at a greater elevation than three thousand feet. All was verdure. The dome of the Titlis was barely visible. Engelberg is not troubled with its white vision. The few small glaciers which lie at the extremity of the valley are in no way oppressive. What dominates over the whole is the proud and tawny pyramid, rising to the left, and in the rear of the monastery,—the peak of the Angel (*l'Ange*). Why not *Archangel?* Like St. Michael, this too, with its celestial sword, has stricken down the Devil, and bidden peace prevail on high. Nothing can any longer molest it. All seems designed for repose; I was about to say, for slumber. In the village you hear no noises, no contention, no infantile cries or weeping. Never before had we seen such charming children. Little barefooted Raphaels, they came, with a delicate and almost Italian grace, to seize and kiss your hand.

It is a significant fact that the cats and dogs of Engelberg are the best friends in the world.

The abbey, formerly a sovereign power, seems no longer to reign except in its cloister. There are no indications now either of an intolerant spirit or a gloomy fanaticism. The beautiful church, nobly decorated with its rich marble columns, is truly a place for meditation and prayer.

By its side is its graveyard, where we saw two touching things: upon the tombs the portraits of the dead, of the grave burgomaster and his prudent wife, both reünited there. *One in life, one in*

*death.* Beneath, the basin of holy water, mixed with the water of heaven. Thither the little birds repair to quench their thirst. It was evening, and the night was rapidly closing in; but Robin Redbreast was still there. He hopped from cross to cross, and fluttered over the whole graveyard,—his song subdued, and full of gentleness and melancholy.

The church is situated on the road leading to the bottom of the valley. I know not what attraction constantly drew me towards it. Upon the road, it is true, a beautiful cascade is half hidden in a wood of alder and sycamore. But that which moves and charms one is the valley itself, with its fair and stately aspect. In spite of its fresh verdure, one ever feels there something of the melancholy of eventide.

Near the cascade, with its incessant eddies, feeds the mild cow of Unterwald—dreaming? or asleep? Stones, which have crumbled through the humidity of the place, are slowly covering themselves with moss, but have not yet been able to effect their tasks completely. We feel here the mutability of things; yet the scene is neither dull nor desolate. It is simply grave and full of thought. A semicircle of snowy mountain-peaks closes up the further end of the valley: *Finis Mundi.*

Returning homeward, we pass some brown-coloured châlets, through whose open windows, all enriched with flowers, issue the fresh voices of young girls. The cadenced sounds of the looms mingle with them, for the young girls are weaving silk. This is the graceful industrial occupation of the valley. But they are alone, their family having mounted to the high grounds for haymaking, or to collect their flocks. Solitude and the great silence at moments oppress us. Song in this too gentle country would sleep, perhaps? They better love the *hyolé* of the Alps, which makes the mountain speak. It seems as if the melodies of birds crossed, and responded to, one another.

Engelberg, like every other valley, has its mystery.

If you turn to the right, below the Orphans' Home of the Nuns, you penetrate into a little glen, pass through a small and scanty wood,

and then ascend a beautiful grassy knoll overshadowed with antique sycamores. Here, turning round, you see for the first time before you the Titlis, tranquil and stately, with its dome of snow. The further you recede the more it enlarges, but always with a peaceful grandeur. A painful contrast, however, is afforded at the end of the glen, by an immense landslip or avalanche. The mountain can no longer retain its bulk, nor its snows, nor its vegetation. Everywhere it rains down ruin, through which it is with difficulty one forces one's way.

Below, concealed amongst the tall herbage, a black solitary stone nearly overthrew us. We read upon it these figures :—

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 6 |
| 8 | 9 |

There was no inscription; only the cross, and the date, remained. This cross, and this date, in a scene so wild, in the depth of the desert, set one dreaming.

But of all this gloom Engelberg knows nothing. It is completely wrapt up in its own fresh and tranquil vision.

Gradually the calm, which everywhere prevails, is felt by yourself. The heart has not ceased to beat, but its too powerful vibrations have slackened. Its wounds do not pain so keenly. The dark evil dreams of the lower world cannot ascend so high as this, nor those harassing visions which ever keep near the earth. In the serene light the soul hovers above the perishable things which to-morrow will be no more. So near to heaven, it seems that if the gaze sinks, it is from the depth of the peace of God.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE TENANTS OF THE MOUNTAIN.

ONE thing has always saddened and astonished me in the Mountain; namely, that I should see so few animals, and hear so few songs. Yet its gracious valleys seem intended for life. They are like so many suspended cradles waiting for their tenants. According to the season, the birds and the mammals of the North or the South should be found within them.

Wherever Man has reverenced the Alps, up to the limit of perpetual snow, rises the grassy meadow-land, unique in its perfume and savour.

And all the trees, from the arolla on high to the walnut below, hold in reserve, in their unctuous and oleaginous fruit, a mild yet penetrating warmth. The bird every day may rekindle here his tiny flame, and defy the fogs and the icy currents which fall at night from the summits.

All is present—the banquet and the shelter—and yet, how silent have the Alps become! I do not speak of the great heights to which we rarely mount, and which the wild goats and the chamois formerly

peopled. What mortal is to-day so happy as to see these elegant and delicate creatures standing sharply outlined upon the inaccessible peaks?

The chamois is passing away; the wild goat has disappeared. He demanded nothing of man, and never descended from his wildernesses. For love, he reserved himself until the winter,—for that deep night when he thought himself in safety. Alone, amidst death, he affirmed the existence of life, and protested against the grief of Nature and its dull immobility.

But, behold, the malice of man pursued him. Man found a pleasure in smiting the beautiful animal, and shooting him down in his happiest moment of existence.

Some smaller denizens of the mountain-height have likewise not been spared. The innocent marmots, whose whistle formerly resounded everywhere, in many cantons are now entirely silent. In the Grisons, where formerly a little grace was given them, they are now destroyed *en masse*, or eaten. In winter, the peasants surprise them while they are asleep. In their well-closed recess they lie five or six together, forming a little circle on a bed of soft perfumed hay. The hunter disinters them, slings them upon his pole, and returns home. In the warmth of the fireside they awake from their lethargy; then he strikes and kills them. At other times, he surprises them when they awake in spring from their long winter-slumber, and are like drunkards in the ecstasy of the open day. The keen air of the mountain acts strongly on their poor empty heads, and fills them with a kind of intoxication. The hunter laughs at their antics, and then kills them.

It is a crime, for the innocent marmot is sick at heart. The little Savoyard, who cherishes him no longer, had not a surer friend. One day I saw one of them ill-treated by his little master. I reprimanded him gently, and caressed and consoled the poor little animal whose moans had troubled me. He was quick of comprehension, crept upon me, and clung to my shoulder, as he had clung to that of the young

Savoyard. I could not separate him from me; and we returned home together.

On reaching the regions where he lives (at an elevation of between four thousand and eight thousand feet), we find outspread before us the marvellous Alpine meadows. Their beautiful vegetation, of a greenness at once young, delicate, and deep, is a perfect feast and enchantment for the eye. They are enamelled with flowers which, owing to their force of light, may justly be called luminous. Their season is all the richer for being late.

Even before its time, the earth, cherishing beneath its snows the warmth of the previous year, awakens these tiny lives. The silena and the soldanella wait only for the glance of the sun to burst into flower. Their inner warmth melts the snow around them. Above, it is rounded like the vault of a small temple. The silena, under these snowy draperies, expands its rosy corbel; the soldanella hangs aloft its melancholy bell.

But now comes the day, and the sky is shining. The air, so elastic at these great elevations, retains neither warmth nor light. They are all to the advantage of the gladdened earth, which, in July and August, they supply with a rapid, intense, fairy-like summer. The southern wind also does its work. Did it always blow, the Alpine glaciers would soon be melted. With the speed of an arrow it has come from its burning desert, and has not paused on its way to slake its thirst. It swoops down upon the great reservoir, and whispers to the glaciers, the snows, and the trembling soldanella, "I burn." The latter yields up to it the water which filtrates from its little cup. The wind drinks, and passes on.

But growing heavier, it descends into the valleys in mighty waves. The gentians and the daphnes are longing to flower. The Fœhn no longer encounters any snows; they have melted already. And yet it is always thirsty! Whither will it go to quench its appetite? To the meadow. "Drink," says the herb and the leaf; "drink again, for I wish to live." It drinks, but without touching the *spirit*, the subtle aroma which will be the banquet of the flower. It

springs on the beautiful gentian, opens its urn, and turns it over; for its living and intense blue would otherwise pale too much the azure of heaven.

Why in such glorious scenes do we meet only with solitude and silence? These flowers so naturally demand the songs of the birds. In spite of the sun, and the brilliancy of the season, Nature does not appear to me completely awakened.

Who has created this desert, and suppressed the lives and joys of the mountain? Yon cruel bird whom I see hovering in the sky like a black speck; who is already swooping down upon a victim! Undoubtedly, to feed these unwieldy creatures large supplies are needed, and the poor little songsters have nothing to offer but their soul. In

its impartiality, however, though Nature may often wound us, it remains just. It does not multiply its "eaters" to excess; it loves also its little birds. In Switzerland each canton has but one or two couples of these hungry freebooters. If any strangers seek to introduce themselves, they are not permitted. Do not think, though, that it is the eagle which first gives chase to the intruder. It is the weak which expel him,—the good and brave swallows.

In '68, at Saint Gervais, we were witnesses of this interesting scene of expulsion. We were ascending the *Pont du Diable*, when we heard a great noise above the ravine. At no great height, clouds of swallows were gathering from all directions, until they darkened the sky. Just over them we caught occasional glimpses of two immense expanded wings,—either the royal eagle, or the eagle vulture, or the formidable gypaëtos.

Our swallows were not the least afraid. Above and beneath, first on one side, then on another, they wheeled, and they rose, and they sank, harassing the huge bird, and stimulating themselves to action by their loud quick cries, which plainly said: "Hold firm,—do not be afraid,—let us drive out the tyrant." He, affrighted, and with wails of distress, cowardly sought safety in flight. The black and valiant army, after having thoroughly tormented and humiliated the imbecile giant, pursued him with their peculiar hooting. Nor did they return in peace to their own affairs until they had seen the fugitive disappear behind Montjoie, in the rugged mountain-passes.

But far more than the eagle has man been terrible to the bird. Let the latter be on his guard, either in rising or descending, for he will find man on his path, with all his implements of death. Sixty thousand fall into his nets at the descent of the Saint Gothard, and millions, Tschudi tells us, when the great equinoctial migrations take place. Sweet Lombardy offers up hecatombs of warblers, redbreasts, and nightingales. Those who survive, and persist in their onward course, can find neither peace nor security. If you wish to meet again with the bird in certain districts, go to the wildest localities, to the margin of the inaccessible ravines. Elsewhere, all is hushed.

The Alp has nothing wherewith to delight itself to-day but the ascent of the adventurous goat in the tracks of the chamois, and the visit of the prudent and peaceful cows towards the Saint Jean. Their grand departure for this mountain-desert has always appeared to me a melancholy scene. The ringing of their bells; their laboured breathing up the slow ascent; then the empty stables, with gates wide open! The village will no longer see them coming to the pool to drink, will no longer hear their heavy footsteps, and so, at first, we are conscious of a mournful silence.

We think, too, of the cowherd who goes for so many months to live in the grand solitude of the heights. At first we abandon to him only the meadows which no scythe ever mows. Sometimes, in certain cantons, the flock must cross a glacier to gain their pasturage. A suitable opportunity must be waited for. A few hours sooner or later, the passage would be impossible.

Thus the world of moonlit lake and mountain closes in upon the herdsman. Nor will he attempt to return until the end of summer, when the cold nights have consolidated the glacier.

What will be the society of the poor solitary? If the herd should be considerable, they will join together to make their cheeses. But this is always dreary. Formerly they had, it is said, mysterious guests, invisible friends. Alas! what has become of them? Those good little spirits, the *Stallmaenchen—stall*, a stable; *maenchen*,

manikins—of old time inhabited the mountain. They lived underground, but at no great depth; they much preferred the vicinity of men, and loved to live in the byres along with the people they affected. In winter, when the cold raged, and snow covered the ground, they concealed themselves among the hay. When they wished to sleep, they made their tiny bed in a horse's ear, and slept as soundly as we upon our pillows of down.

But as soon as spring returned, and the cattle came back to the mountain, they kept company with them, and cradled themselves upon the stems of the flowers. At night they retired to the bell of a campanula, or of some other blossom, which, closing itself upon them, preserved them thus from the dew and the wind.

It is said that in the mountains of Saxony men know how to make them useful; and little as they are, they are more diligent than men. They work in the evening, especially, at milking the cows and cleansing the stalls. Perhaps they are somewhat partial to cream, for the farmer often finds them hidden at the bottom of the churning-pot, and without arguing too much, leaves them a small portion.

"In the house of Pierre Gris, a rich carrier, who was always on the road, prosperity increased daily, to the great astonishment of all. It could not be natural, nor was it so in effect. Pierre Gris alone had not the least suspicion of its cause, though his servants knew very well that it was owing to the Stallmaenchen. If Pierre Gris had known, loud would have been his exclamations; for he could not endure these mysteries, and thought they were things contrary to religion.

"The servants were full of gratitude. In winter they bought warm stuffs for their little friends, that they might not suffer from the cold. In summer they made them light airy garments, on account of the great heat.

"The most active received for his reward a small red cape, of fine cloth, which procured him the surname of *Red Hood*.

"The tiny Stallmaenchen could wish for no better life; in the

evening they frolicked about the servants' chamber, and listened to the tales they told,—but only in the absence of Pierre Gris.

"The latter arranged to return home at harvest-time. On one occasion, the crops so far exceeded all his hopes, that he sent for his head servant, and said to him: 'Come, Baltzer, I must reward thee, for without thy care things would not have turned out thus.'

"'No, no, it is not I,' stammered Baltzer; 'for if *they* were not here—'

"'Who? *they?*' interrupted the carrier.

"'Yes! the little good people, the Stallmaenchen.

"'What!' cried Pierre Gris; 'such vermin in *my* house!' And he made the sign of the cross.

"'That which is done is done,' muttered Baltzer to himself; and he resolved to give his friends warning before any one had time to kill them.

"'Stallmaenchen, come, come!'

"They were at hand; pressing close against one another, and shedding burning tears, while singing through them,—

"'The Stallmaenchen are going away!
Think of them under the earth, we pray!'

"And all the servants, even down to the keeper of the geese, sobbing and lamenting greatly, cried, 'Farewell, Stallmaenchen, farewell!'

"When the servants had departed, the good people laid themselves down for the last time in their old abode, with the intention of quitting the place at daybreak. And, in the morning, when the first servant appeared, they had all taken flight.

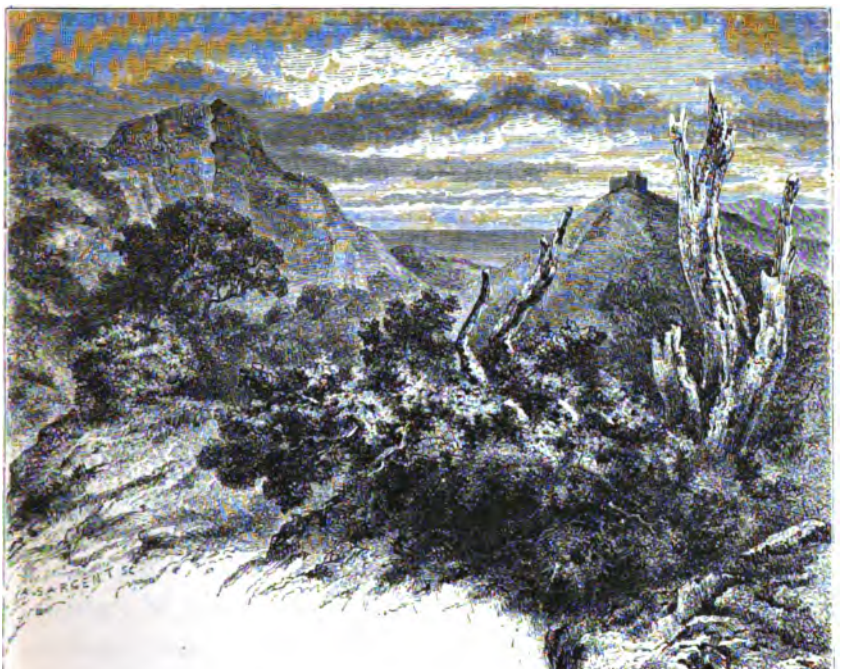
"Red Hood alone had overslept himself. The weather was very warm, and throwing himself down on the threshold of the stable-door, he had gone to sleep under his little cape, which served him as a pillow. The others, when they went away, had forgotten him.

"When Pierre Gris appeared, with his heartless workmen, Red Hood was still asleep. He was on the point of being crushed.

"'For the love of God, do not kill him!' cried all the servants. Pierre Gris looked upon the ground, turned him over with one foot, and with the other crushed him.

"Baltzer made him a coffin. They put into it their dear little friend, and buried him in the garden, behind the stable where he had lived so long in peace.

"Then all the domestics left the house, and with them went its good fortune and prosperity."



# CHAPTER X.

## THE HIGHLANDS.

### I.—THE WEST: OSSIAN.

THERE are mountains less sublime in effect than the Alps, which produce a powerful impression on the soul by their wild solitudes.

The loftiest peaks are not always those which seem the grandest. Some, from the great elevation of their base, appear to be only of moderate dimensions. But if they start abruptly from the plain, from the level of the sea,—if they excavate deep gorges at their foot, and inextricable defiles, what can be more impressive?

Such is the case in Scotland, which it is a mistake to compare with Switzerland. Its mountains have no glaciers, and in summer-time they do not preserve their snowy shrouds. Their peaks erect

themselves with bald heads, whitened and cloven by the labour of Time.

In Scotland, everything is compressed into a small space; the localities and their associations; it is this which makes its grandeur.

Figure to yourself an immense island of granite, elevating in its folds a few isolated peaks of basalt. From the Lowlands they rise haughty, black, vigilant, observing, one would say, from Edinburgh and Stirling, the gloomy Northern Sea; from Glasgow, or rather Dumbarton, the storms of the Atlantic, and defending their isle. And all around to the southward, wherever they are able to raise their masses, they supply Scotland with a noble and solemn rampart.

In the centre, in the Grampians, all is granite. This is the ancient Scotia, where everything is accumulation. The vitrified lava was not elevated peacefully, but rose like the sea, in its days of tempest, which points to the sky an undulating crest. The billow of granite has never fallen back. It has made the earth bristle with its sharp pinnacles; it has left to the hollows all the profundities excavated in the tempest. And it is this which gives to mountains not exceeding, the highest of them, four thousand feet, a grand effect which we seek in vain elsewhere.

Scotland (we may say), feeling the agitation of the Scandinavian sea, has expanded westward towards the Atlantic, and the soft airs of the Gulf Stream. In this direction she has opened herself to the Ocean, allowing it to penetrate freely everywhere. But Father Ocean has his excesses. In those deep gulfs the billows would have rushed to the assault, if, in front of herself, Scotland had not planted as a protection the swarming islands of the Hebrides. Firm among the waves they lie, two hundred in number—all bristling with rugged mountains. Nothing but granite, basalt, and black slates.

What can be grander than to see them contending with the waters? You may behold this magnificent spectacle from Argyllshire, from the land of Morven—a sombre rock—a savage promontory, thrust forward into the sea. There we see the cradle of Scotland; there its first songs were born; there Ossian fought in behalf of justice and the weak. All things gather around him, and immortalize him. The noble note

he sounds is monotonous; the voice of battle returns again, and yet again; and what can be more in harmony with the genius of the place, and its eternal storms? The struggles of men are in accordance with the struggles of the waves. With the tempests, and the mists which so frequently accumulate—warrior-mists, let us say, fantastic dragons, which one sees arrayed in battle-order, rolling and rushing headlong, charging one another, rending each other's flanks, plunging into the ravines, re-mounting, and vanishing far away. Man has followed their example; has waged war against his kind. But from these troubled visions some gentle images detach themselves, which we seek to recover on the solitary land, or the face of the irritated sea.

Scotland, one perceives, is the Land of Regrets. There is nothing stable upon this island of granite. The soul ever looks towards the mirage from on high, which incessantly renews itself, and yet is never the same. We would fain love it; the heart goes forth to seize it, and all is gone! Was it, then, a mere empty dream? No; the whole returns. It is a singular and an astonishing circumstance—nay, more, a pathetic and touching one—that in this gloomy country, and under those leaden clouds which veil the sky with a funereal pall, one fears not death. We call upon those whom we have loved, and the pale ghosts issue from their graves, and glide,—fugitive images of the long ago,—into the mists, stretching forth "their vaporous hands."

It is an eternal poem. The heart is incessantly disturbed with its memories of what *has been*, and frequently it cannot survive the past. The Virgin of the Mists, with slow and gentle eyes, has secretly equipped herself to follow him she loves. It is with his hand that she is stricken. He recognizes her. The sharpest arrow ever forged—grief—wounds him to the very soul. Everywhere and always you discover two hearts blent in one, under a twofold grave. But Scotland with her heather has covered all.

What remains,—what we still see,—these ruins of castles, or, rather, fortresses, planted, like the eyries of the eagle, on the summit of precipitous promontories, belong to a later age. They continue the

tradition of defence. Down to the ninth century, Scotland lived within them, like an advanced guard, on the watch for the corsairs and freebooters of the North. When her peril came from the South, she abandoned the heights of Dunstaffnage, she carried her heroic throne to Scone—a throne of granite. But at the least signal of alarm she saw all her vassals of the Isles hasten to her side. Robert Bruce came from the rough rocks of Arran to stay the progress of Edward II. at the head of his grand army and his mighty lords.

To-day, in spite of the eddying waters in the winding lochs, we can penetrate into every part of the labyrinth, and contemplate, mingled with human handiwork, the great monuments of Nature. And, first, black *Staffa*, with its solitary temple, consisting of a thousand basalt columns,—its musical grotto, whence, in the hour of the storm, the deepest sighs escape, like the last tremulous vibrations of an organ.

By its side, *Iona*,—low and sandy, the melancholy cradle of Christianity in Scotland. If her kings received their crowns at Scone, they were all buried in holy earth, in the consecrated isle which a prophecy saved from a predicted flood. Duncan, stabbed by Macbeth's dagger, was the last Scottish sovereign interred in the sepulchre of Iona.

It is the land of religious memories: the cross of Christ the Saviour stands beside the monumental stones.

---

## II.—CENTRAL SCOTLAND: THE CLANS.

When from the Islands we return into Scotland through the lochs and bays of Argyllshire, everything, notwithstanding the sad glooms of the sky, seems for a moment full of animation and life. Upon the surface of these bays the boats cross one another. Loch Fyne, in the summer-season (June and July), counts upwards of eight hundred, fishing for her delicate fish, a matter of contention between the three kingdoms. When the nets are brought up with a heavy burden, the

air is rent with a shout, like the sound of a festival. The old airs of the lakes, the *jorams*, are awakened, and speed afar on the undulations of the breeze.

Through this deep loch you may penetrate into the very heart of the mountains; and a majestic revelation suddenly opens before you. After the broad horizons of the sea, and the black islands of basalt, come the gloomy and shadowy glens, and above them, the peaks of granite. At intervals they stand apart from the general mass, and hover like solitary sentinels over the solitary valleys.

Every variety of landscape is accumulated on this point of the Grampians: the wild, dreary, desolate desert; the deep ravine, crowded with ruins. You enter into the maze; you make your way into each winding corridor, which seems to have no issue. Not long ago, as in the Valais, at Louèche and the Gemmi, you ascended by ladders the pass of the Trosachs, which barred the road to Cromwell.

Here it is that the peaks gather their mighty host. In the south-west of Perthshire lie close together the daring summits of Ben Lomond, Ben An, Ben Venue, Ben More, and Ben Ledi (the "hill of God"). The waters runing and leaping in each profound ravine, discover there a realm which is all their own. Nature seems to be everywhere dissolved in tears. You meet with nothing but pools, and cascades, and waterfalls, and hurrying torrents, and rivers winding in serpentine coils. But at the foot of each grand mountain all these

wild waters assemble in quest of repose, and concentrate themselves in lovely basins, besprinkled with enchanted isles.

If the summit of the mountain be bare and devastated, in its sheltered hollows, where the mosses, drop by drop, distil the moisture of the mists, it throws off its uniform mantle of heather, and assumes a holiday attire of pleasant verdure. The eglantine and the bindweed stream over a carpet of violets or primroses. Higher up, the birches spread abroad the light shadow of their pale green foliage. You can conceive of nothing more romantic or more tender than a scene like this, two paces distant from the ruggedest of landscapes.

In the marshy districts the picture is sadly dreary. The unstable earth, rising and sinking beneath your feet, disquiets you. The heavy gray fogs willingly rest upon this tomb, which already contains but too considerable a store of their lethargic waters. You feel yourself oppressed and overwhelmed; you long for the free air; you ask pity of the mountain; you dream of the broad valley and the open plain. At length the scene opens grandly on the extremity of Loch Tay. The mountain-chain abruptly sinks, as if to make room for the river as it flows towards the smiling country of the "Fair Maid of Perth." Through the beautiful shadowy depths of Blair-Athol, it hastens on, mingling with the lengthened murmurs of pine and larch the noise of

its waterfalls; and then speeds away, in the open sunlight, to fertilize the plain.

But scarcely have you escaped from the shades and mists of the solitude before you wish to return to it again. Nor is the wild aspect of Nature your sole attraction. It, too, has its memories; Scotland is peopled with them. We are here in the country of the Clans. Each defile, each height, every lake, and every morass, have their legends (see the Chapter: *The Scottish Lakes*). Everywhere has sped the Fiery Cross. Is it the cry of the curlews which now I hear? One would rather say that this mysterious whistling, so many times repeated, is designed to summon from the earth an army.

Each clan is one single and numerous family, all whose members bear the same name, and wear the same colours on their plaid. They

recognize the same symbol. To their bonnet the Clan Campbell attach a sprig of myrtle; Macdonald, a bunch of heather; Macgregor, a spray of the Scottish pine.

A single chief, father and patriarch. This is the grand and original side of the relationship, and is in direct opposition to the feudal system. The clan and the fief are enemies. The clan is a noble association of kinsmen. All the Campbells are *of* the Campbells. With the same free step, they come to the feast and the fight.

At the best-defended point of the mountain, that fortress of granite, is planted the clan's stronghold. A sombre donjon; the pale gleam of dying day can scarcely pierce through its narrow loopholes. Is this a castle or a prison? Frequently the great mountain in its rear overhung it, and kept it in the shadow; but if this shadow was drear and eëry, the steep escarpments of the mountain protected the castle, and rendered it invulnerable.

In a nature so ruggedly, but so nobly austere, everything was nobly marked, for good or evil: nothing was commonplace. The Highlander acquired from his mountain-home his wild roughness of character, but also his manly pride, and the spontaneous genius of races which have undergone no admixture; mobile as his mists, but in the fidelity of his heart firm as his granite.

For a long time he was separate from the world. Each family in its lonely glen was wrapped up in its own past and its own traditions. Each had its bard—a living book which knew all things; an oracle which everybody consulted. He taught the young laird, inoculating him and firing his blood with the spirit of his fathers, their pride, the sombre visions handed down from generation to generation, the battles of old times, and the irreconcilable hatreds.

At the feast, where the long board was hospitably spread for all, even to the lowest of the clan—ay, down to the poor "natural"—the bard sang aloud his "Iliad." In the courtyard, darkened by ancient sycamores, a mimic representation took place of a combat with a hostile clan. The bagpipe intermingled its pibroch and rude martial strains. First, the rapid notes, the precipitated steps; then the light

air of a merry march. When the encounter took place, confused shouts, and the clash of arms and bucklers. Next, an interval of repose—a melancholy silence—followed by a more furious charge, and defeat or victory. The whole concluding with a plaintive and prolonged murmur; a funeral hymn for those who were no more!

You have not before you here the minstrel of stately courts, seated, and bending over his harp; for the piper is a warrior, a fighting man. He went and he came; one might say that he went to draw his sword.

May these valorous airs endure for ever! May they revive those old ballads of the Long Ago, so graceful and so charming!

In those airs, in those songs, we meet with Scotland herself, with her purer genius, and the best portion of her soul.

---

### III.—SUTHERLANDSHIRE—SOLITUDE.

We have reached the extremity of the island—Sutherland (the land of the South). It is a strange name for the north of Scotland. But it *was* the south, in effect, for the Arctic mariner, who, across the ice-banks, descried the capes of this more clement land. And to-day, all the birds of the north, in their usual migration, salute it and bless it, are seized with a desire to rest, and build their nests within it.

A far-distant land, where a desert has been created, and which would be wholly desolate, if the great family of animals did not cheer it with their lives.

On the meagre heathery pasture land, by the side of the recent usurper, the large English Cheviot sheep, browses the small sheep of Scotland, black-faced, and of a fine breed.

Cows, clothed against the cold, for they are as shaggy as bears, —cows of gloomy physiognomy, but peaceable not the less,—feed at the bottom of the valleys, and along the margin of the lakes. In the wilder regions, among low forests of pine and larch, stags and deer congregate by thousands.

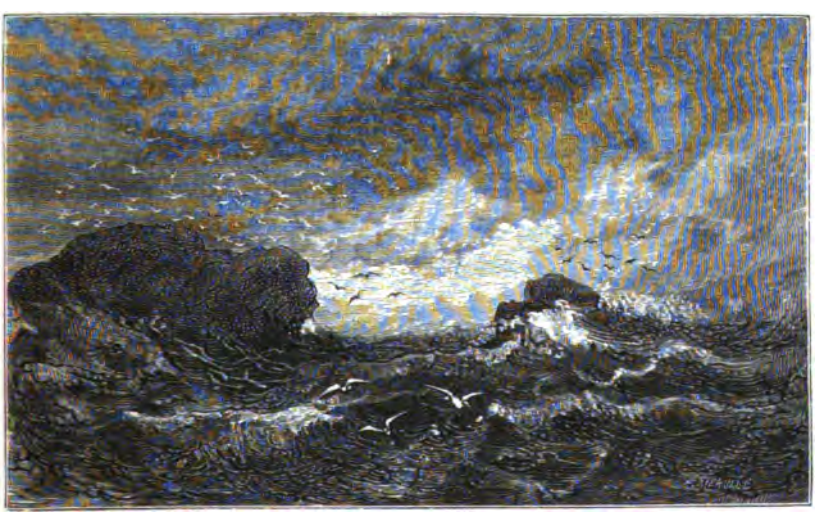
Man alone is absent; and Nature holds a silent colloquy with herself.

At the first glance, the scenery seems of the same character as among the Grampians. Mountains, and lakes, and marshes; moors, and noisy brooklets, flowing in a channel of rock. But everything here is more original; and the plants and birds are unknown in England. Even the sky is changed. In June and July the sun hardly sets. If he disappears for a few hours, he is so close to the horizon, that the crest of the mountains remains constantly illuminated. At full midnight, you read without light, and the warbler sings by your side. The birds are everywhere at work. The sea-eagle, the osprey with his immense wings, hovers above the lakes. On all sides the echoes repeat the loudest clamours, and sounds like those of a trumpet. Then, suddenly, a great silence falls—a silence of death. The fox and the wild cat, those nocturnal creatures which know well that it is not day, have passed in that direction.

The sun of midnight has more *reflections* than *rays*. On the rustling waters is visible a strange, a mysterious, a fantastic, but a

cold illumination. With its pale gold mingles the white radiance of the moon, which no longer reigns over the night in solitary state. These two apparent luminaries, gliding low in the sky, and through the gathering vapours, do not so much animate the firmament as add to its melancholy. In the gloomy winter, and under the crepitations of the *Aurora borealis*, the emotional palpitations of its storm, it appears more full of life.

Yon pale light, however, is the joy of this poor country and of its ocean. It marks the epoch of the fisheries. In July, the few inhabitants of the mountain descend to join in them, as in a joyous festival. The silvery legions of the herrings cover the briny flood with a flood of life. On the isles of sand the congregated seals are present at the spectacle, and regard it curiously with their soft, black eyes. If a boatman should sing, or play upon any instrument, they immediately follow him, and will even make their way to the shore to listen to the bagpipe.



The sea is open also to the birds. They fly to and fro, and sweep down headlong, in immense clouds. The Solan goose drops from its height, and seizes the silvery fish in its talons, like a falcon. The cormorant and the guillemots dive after their prey. The gulls, like so many skirmishers, incessantly attack the feeble, who falteringly desert

the scene of plunder, and abandon the little they have gained. It is an indescribable picture of noisy agitation, an endless dialogue between the sea and the sky.

How much deeper and more desolate appears the solitude when we regain the mountain. No human face! Unless, indeed, we come upon some open moorland, where the shepherd, with his faithful collie, tends his flock. Melancholy and silent, he scarcely notes the passer-

by. Knows he aught of the tragical drama which depopulated his land? From his look, you would say so. He seems to be gazing steadfastly on distant shores.

All his kith and kin have departed; and of all he loved nothing remains but his bagpipe. When he feels himself too much alone, too melancholy, he takes and plays it. Yet he knows but one and the same air, and this he for ever and ever repeats:—*Hatil mi tulish* (We shall return no more).

I cannot finish my mountain pilgrimage, I cannot quit Scotland, without hailing its queen—Edinburgh. Enthroned on its several hills, it seems from a distance sovereign and majestic. Giant's causeways

—bridges boldly flung from one hill to another—increase the romantic effect. Down below lies the Old Town, with all its historic Past, rising higher and higher with every century. The houses do not extend in a lateral direction, having mounted story above story with each succeeding generation. They rise terrace above terrace, and they seem to rise continuously, like the citadel of basalt, which, beginning from below, has also risen some six hundred feet in elevation. A noble rivalry, methinks! Yon venerable houses, with their twelve tiers (or "flats")—what have they not to relate? And ah, what memories are gathered about the melancholy Palace of Holyrood, situated at the extremity of the long street of the Canongate!

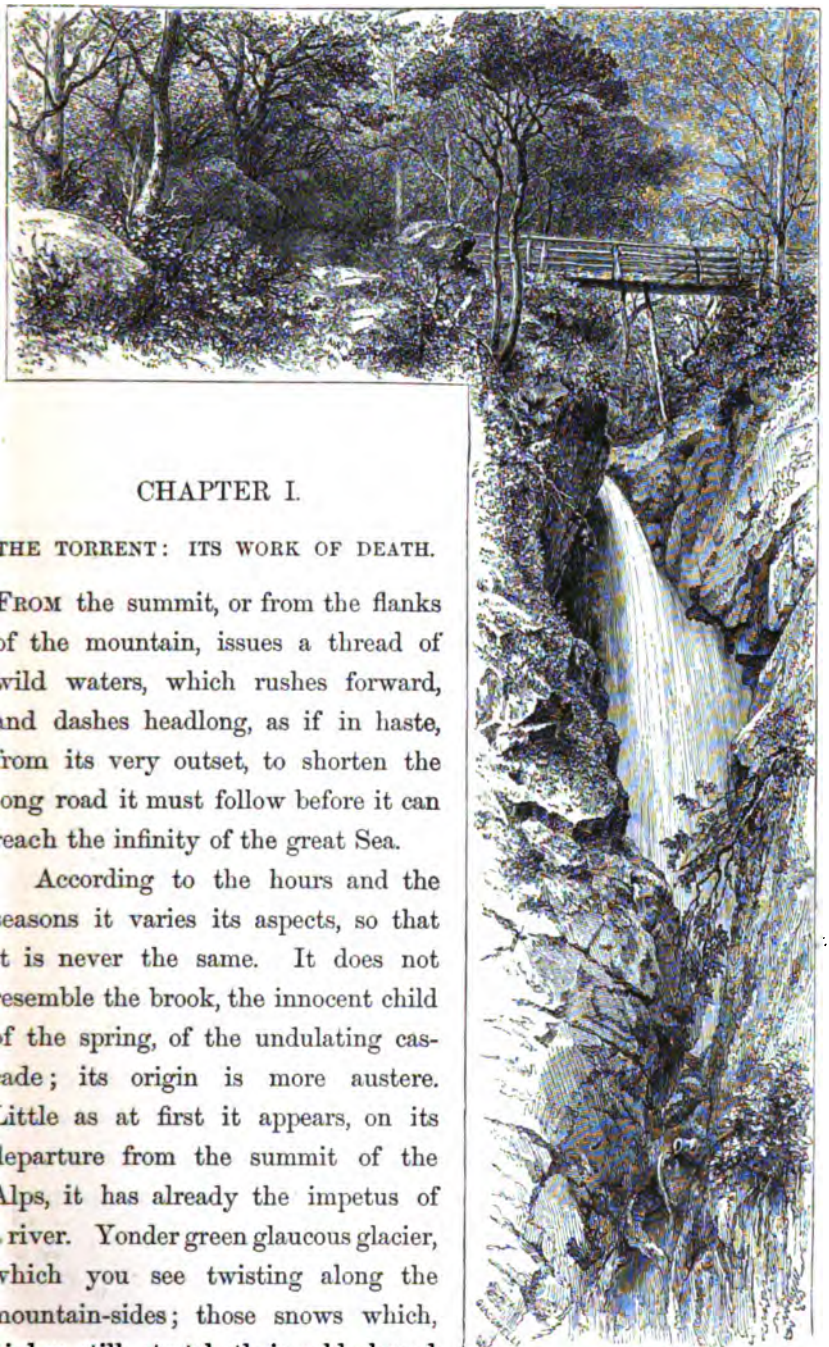
At the moment when the history of Scotland was finally completed, a man arose, who picked up and brought together these legacies of the Past; with pious care he renewed the epitaphs on the tombs. And for those who had no gravestones, he erected a monument (see "Old Mortality"). An admirable narrator, and a romancist ever faithful and truthful under his mask of fiction, Walter Scott has given Scotland to Europe. And Europe thanks him!

As from below, from its roots, and from the soil, the tree springs upward, so the New Town of Edinburgh has sprung from its mother, the ancient city. But all its glances are bent towards the latter; as you clearly see from every monument which rises erect, and consecrates the old associations, and offers homage to the masters of Thought. Lower down, at a distance of one and a half to two miles, she has built around Leith Harbour a commercial suburb, while brooding on her loftiest hill, she gazes towards the unbounded horizons.

How, then, can she be otherwise than grand? Has she not always Arthur's Seat before her, the throne of the hero?

Do not let us any longer attempt to compare Scotland with England, Edinburgh with Constantinople. Edinburgh can only be compared with herself; she is the city of the Intellect.

RIVER SCENERY



## CHAPTER I.

### THE TORRENT: ITS WORK OF DEATH.

FROM the summit, or from the flanks of the mountain, issues a thread of wild waters, which rushes forward, and dashes headlong, as if in haste, from its very outset, to shorten the long road it must follow before it can reach the infinity of the great Sea.

According to the hours and the seasons it varies its aspects, so that it is never the same. It does not resemble the brook, the innocent child of the spring, of the undulating cascade; its origin is more austere. Little as at first it appears, on its departure from the summit of the Alps, it has already the impetus of a river. Yonder green glaucous glacier, which you see twisting along the mountain-sides; those snows which, higher still, stretch their cold shroud

abroad,—behold in these its well-head! It is more than a flowing river; down the abrupt descent it rolls like an avalanche of mighty waters. To see its bristling eddies, who would think it immovable? With its enormous weight, does it not crush and overwhelm the valley?

A force more powerful than gravitation holds it back—namely, *cohesion*. But a subtle spirit penetrates it and dissolves it in detail —the sun, the hot winds of Africa, the Fœhn, the Autan—which nothing can resist. The torrent has only to flow. In the hot days of the storm, when the sun burns athwart the milky vapours of the sky, it swells, it assumes its grave low tone, it becomes imposing.

The narrow valley, close and confined, which pants under the oppression, summons from on high its vivifying powers. It would seem, indeed, as if the river of ice responds to this desire; hastening and winding towards it. Thanks to its rapid impulse, those gray, labouring, and mortally cold waters, with which the Sea of Death supplies it, reänimate, grow electric, and resume a soul, as it were, after many centuries of captivity. Left to itself, it would dart forward, like the lightning. But in its earliest course it is arrested and checked by obstacles. The strong compact army of black firs divides it, and slackens its march; the shattered rocks obstruct its progress. Starting from such a height, it supposed that its only duty was to suffer itself to descend; and, lo! it finds already that it must labour and strive.

The heroic struggle, in all its various phases, fills the mountain with voice and animation. But for this the scene would be silent and dead, by dint of its very grandeur. The young torrent, bold even as we are at the opening of life, in its juvenile vivacity gives to these cold and solemn forms which hover there on high movement, and respiration, and progress; ay, and—if I may dare to say so—passion!

Nothing is more impressive or more pathetic than to see the mountain-torrent wrestle and recede, in the whirl of the desperate combat.

It gives you the vertigo when, under the open sky, it tumbles from fall to fall, from a height, perhaps, of twelve thousand feet, like the Rhine of the Bernina. From the road which skirts the precipice you see it on its course. Across its uneven route the great rocks have fallen, and formed a Titanic accumulation. They lie, all those giants of stone, motionless, before the invincible impetus of the "wild water." But when one is a torrent one does not allow one's-self to be conquered. So it climbs the boulders, and you may also hear its waters sapping them underneath. Above, it leaps, it rises in vaults of dazzling crystals; it leaps through the fissures; it is the sheaf, the gerb of a gigantic fountain. Lower down, crushed back by an enemy stronger than it expected, it recedes for a moment into its channel, whirling and hurling volumes of foam. Splendid rainbows span it with arches of light. Beneath, a fire of diamonds sparkles.

The firs, taciturn genii! preside over the infernal combat. But at last the fierce contention subsides, and everything is silent. The two banks drawing nearer together, shut in the troubled stream. Has it then disappeared, sunken in the depths? Look through the gloomy crevasse at your feet. From the bottom of its night, do you not hear a hoarse murmur still? If you launch a stone, the cold wind lifts it at first, and drives it back against the sides of the ravine; but in a moment you hear a last dull, funereal shock, like the sound of a landslip in a ditch. The stone has been engulfed and reduced into powder, at a depth of eighteen hundred feet. "Thou wilt ever and for ever carry on thy work of excavation, gloomy torrent of the *Via Mala!* The snows and the glaciers which feed thee are far from being exhausted."

But is it just that thou, whom I greet again on emerging from the night, should come upon me with muddy waters? All is now sad and desolate on thy banks; life itself has taken leave of thee. Some meagre trees, sullied with thy black mud, alone behold thy course. Thou art less terrible, however, less invincible, than at thy starting-point. Thy bed is broadened, thy slope diminished, and everything mourns as thou goest on thy way of humiliation. We are sensible

of an oppressed nature, the prey of blind elements. The mountain is livid or sombre; the wind blows as if affrighted; the sky, sicklied with floods of dust, sends to us a rayless light.

We are between Thusis and Reichenau, in the land of the storms. Yonder, on the ruined rocks, they wage their battles, sweeping downward when unforeseen and terrible, plucking from the mountain-sides the heavy stones, the black slates, the last remains of the ancient forests.

Everything rolls onward with the torrent. Everything must now give way to it. It flies, as in the Void, and the eye can scarcely follow its track. It is a flash of lightning.

Elsewhere, however, I have seen images of a gloomier desolation and a deadlier death. In our French Alps, I have seen the torrent subject everything to its fatal power, rejoicing over a world of ruin.

Man long ago fled from these regions of terror. He left behind him his villages engulfed, his valleys filled up, his woods converted into the channels of the waters. And there they fly, and rush to and fro, in all directions, and devour or bury the earth, according to their appetites and caprices. Their names are significant. Thus, one, the *Hawk*, swoops down on its prey like the eagle; no means exist of escaping from it. Another, the *Famished*, cries aloud that it is an hungered. And a third, the *Enraged*, howls madly, as it bites and tears the sides of its mother.

The traveller who would fain set out in the morning from Gap or Embrun, never ventures forth until he has interrogated the sky. If it is lowering, he prudently remains at home. For at night the stony ravine, whither he would have jolted in his car, will roll down a deluge of stones and mud to cover the valley.

Upon these loosely-rooted Alps, the last-born of a late upheaval, such dangers are always to be dreaded. The granite, in uplifting and piercing the recent alluvium, has thrown the broken masses behind it in ruinous disorder. If they had but for their protection some thin garment—at the least, trees, brushwood, or turf—but no; they are

wholly defenceless. White with the ghastly whiteness of the bones of the dead, they face the south, the dry Provence, the thirsty and burning wind of Africa. Upon these crumbling limestones, these coarser aggregations, the combinations of the elements are more rapid than on the primeval rocks; bald as they are, the granite mountains are not ravaged, for cataracts instead of torrents roll down their flanks.

But that which has once had life, and which of the *débris* of life makes no new work, becomes fatally the prey of wild agents. Each gnaws at it after its own fashion,—air, water, light, heat, the chemistry of vital force. Under the protective veil of the forests, a pacific intermediary has regulated the savage action.

Our Alps have no more forests; on all sides we see nothing but pale and ghastly cirques, with immense mouths turned to the heavens, which seem to demand their prey. For whole months a death-silence hovers above them. Not a cloud passes; not even a drop of dew slakes the thirst of these arenas of fire. Every summer, the sun converts their yawning funnels into pitiless reflectors. The burned rock, reduced to ashes, bares itself beneath your footsteps; you sink up to your knees in dust where, a year ago, the torrent swept everything before it!

Towards autumn, a singular phenomenon occurs, analogous to that which is displayed in the whirlpools of the ocean. Gradually, everything is drawn thither. The seemingly motionless water is carried to this one spot. The very force of the attraction makes its immobility apparent. By degrees, as it approaches the abyss, its motion grows visible, and assumes a thunderous intensity. It is the summons of the Void! The frail boat, the powerful ship, once drawn within the fatal circle, precipitate themselves into it as if they were fascinated—were rushing into annihilation. In a moment, all has grown dark.

Around these accursed cirques, the attraction is the same. It is still mid-day. In the morning, the sun rose palely in the mist, the air was heavy as lead. Gray clouds have gradually overspread the horizon, and smoky streaks and yellow coppery tints have mingled with them.

Sombre and fierce is the aspect of the sky. Under the blackness of heaven, the amphitheatre has grown horrible! It might be compared to a phantom, watching under its shroud.

Nothing is astir as yet, and one feels that something terrible is looming. But the period of expectancy is brief. All rushes down at once. The electric storm has neither time nor duration. The whirlpool cannot receive everything. Broad at the opening, below it has the narrow neck of a funnel. And yet the water-spout pours itself forth at a single stroke. Hence arise gigantic struggles, and mad excesses, and tossings, and wild efforts of stones and mud to rise and regain the summit. The air, pressed back by the heavy mass below, escapes with a roar. It marches in the van; and it too works everywhere its work of death. It raises great stones like bits of straw, breaks down bridges, sweeps away houses, and converts the entire region into a desert.

It is no unfrequent occurrence that several torrents should toil in concert; they hasten from the lateral valleys to convey their tribute of ruins. When they encounter, the collision is terrible. The heaviest masses seem no longer to obey the laws of gravitation, but discharge themselves like grape-shot in the air.

The great torrent, swollen by its tributaries, can find no space in its narrow gorge for its descent. It undermines and it assaults the buttresses of the ravine. If, from above, the cliff resists, it saps it underneath. We feel at a distance the trembling of the soil, and the oscillation of the mountain in the empty space. On issuing from this triumphant war, it advances like a wall of mud, or rather of hideous black lava. The stones follow, rolling down with peals of thunder. All the mountain-echoes ominously respond.

It halts. It has finished its work. The Drac and the Durance,—two torrential rivers,—will carry its *débris* for leagues and leagues beyond. They too owe their existence to the storms.

Yesterday, you might walk dry-footed across the bed of the Durance, though it is two thousand feet in width. In one narrow

gully a little water slowly filtered along. To-day, it is three hundred feet, but no trace of its bed. Fantastic, and driven about in all directions, it spreads abroad, but never excavates. If an obstacle arises, it pauses, diverges elsewhere, and changes its current. The abandoned channel becomes again a shore—a shore of mud and pebbles. "*Until the next storm!*" This is the adieu of the foolish inconstant. Yet to-morrow, it may be, it will return to the sad, drear waste it had deserted.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TORRENT—ITS WORK OF LIFE—THE AVEYRON.

NATURE is maternal, and does not love revolutions.

Torrents, far from being destined to ravage the world, are one of its living forces. They set in motion the great circulation of the fresh waters, which, in an everlasting interchange, flow as rivers into the sea, and return in vapours to the mountain.

Their action, says M. Surrel, who has very closely observed them, is like that of other water-courses, and is exaggerated only by their over-great rapidity. Instead of flowing, they thunder impetuously forward.

But are they truly responsible? Ask rather of the woodman what he has done for centuries with those courageous athletes, the oaks, the beeches, the larches, and the firs, which with serried ranks, like those of an army in battle, covered and supported the mountain-flanks?

The torrent might war as it willed, might long to hurry forward; but its young ardour was moderated by these venerable guardians.

They compelled it to trickle between their ancient colonnades, to lose itself under the breadths of moss extended at their feet. Then, in truth, its course was much more picturesque, and the mountain was fuller of life. But one day man said to the forest: "Thou art useless but to eat up the earth which would otherwise furnish me with grain;" and he felled the forest. When the torrent came down, it met with no more resistance; it carried away the rock; it inundated the field of corn. And as the years went by its force became more and more terrible, until, at last, it swallowed up and destroyed the valley.

On high, some remains of the forest, guarded by their inaccessible position, attempted to hold their ground. But, undermined by the wild torrent, they were, in their turn, compelled to submit and descend. The mountain, formerly covered with verdure, no longer showed aught but bones.

Then, as over everything that is lifeless, began the war of elements; a desperate war, which added lamentation to lamentation, and death to death.

Is there any remedy for this death of deaths? None, but to leave Nature to herself.

If, on this devastated land, you will but spare the rodent tooth of the sheep and the goat, the mountain, pitying its wounds, will heal them of its own accord. In the depth of the funnels—that is, at the end of one or two of them—you will detect a little greenness. Dwarf grasses at first; and next, sweet slender trees. Under the light shade of this miniature forest, hosts of shrubs will seek shelter.

Five or six years have elapsed since the last disaster, and, behold, the destroying tempest has grown reasonable. Always ready for great labours, it is no longer prompt to devastation. The labourer finds in it a beneficent auxiliary, the friend of bygone times.

It hastens to the ocean. But how far away it is!—yonder, yonder—the great Sea! From its high position can it not at least behold the term of its voyage? Most frequently it sees only the high rampart erect before it, which says to it, "Thou shalt not pass!" But, never-

theless, it *must* pass. It has no other route; the slope carries it downward, and it cannot retrace its steps. However immense the obstacle, it must have reason. The more insurmountable seems the barrier, the more force it will accumulate behind it, and, as one might say, of its own will.

This war does not originate with the torrent, whose nature is to glide away and escape in its fluid elasticity. It is with its mother, the mountain, that the combat begins. And at one place it yields; at another it resists it. Noble is the strife, and alive with passion, from which it issues wounded, but more imposing than before. These are no wild elements which have thus detached it from the solitary and sublime heaven. The mechanical force of heat and cold rends asunder the stone, but does not carve or chisel it. It is the torrent alone which has been the great artist. And to help it against the hard granite, the quartz, the silex, it has had no other instrument than its impetus, its desire. These are sufficient to transform the world. Let us judge our torrent by its works.

Without directing the reader's attention to the great arteries, the Ganges and the Niagaras—which have pierced even to the heart of the earth, to pour their riverine floods into the sea—let us look nearer at home, to those Alps of the Dauphiné, so little known.

The traveller who leaves Grenoble on the south, soon sees before him a precipitous lofty wall, four thousand feet in height. It pitilessly keeps apart two contiguous valleys, evidently destined to unite in one.

Until a few years ago, one could pass from the Vercors into the Royanais only by mounting and re-descending, at the peril of one's life, and one's mules' lives, this break-neck path, without any other route than a few steps painfully excavated with the hatchet.

The mountaineer, in his perilous ascent, enviously watched the torrent coming towards him from the summit he was anxious to attain. It precipitated itself downwards into the valley of Echevis, and bounded joyously like a free being. But, to gain this liberty, what efforts had been necessary, how much time had been spent!

Before descending, and while as yet on the summit, it was compelled to conquer a first obstacle. This rampart pierced, a second wall arose at the other end of the valley which held it captive. Who would not have counselled it indolence? to pause there, and in a beautiful lake allow its tranquil waters to fall asleep! But it preferred to resume its hard work as a miner, to bury itself a second time in the night, and excavate in the rock a shadowy passage!

So well does it bite, and sap, and saw, and file, that the monstrous barrier was conquered. One morning the people of Ponts en Royans saw the heroic torrent (the Vernaison) suddenly and freely bounding in their direction.

And now, to-day, the mountaineer and the torrent travel on together. The genius of man has been unable to do more than imitate its hardiness. He has hung the roadway upon the bank above the roaring waters; and like them, too, he has perforated the rock with tunnels. Two worlds have met together to bless the primitive work of the torrent.

Elsewhere, nascent humanity has owed to it its cradle. Long before man's memory, it hollowed out for him the caverns which, alas! were so frequently his asylums in that dim age when man and the bear took refuge in them together, and shuddered at the encounter!

Later, in the medieval gloom, and down nearer to our own times, in wars prolonged, bloody, and bitter, the proscribed fled to them for shelter. An unique bond of complete history; the eternal path which seems to have been trodden by all the pilgrims of life.

The workman, and at the same time the father, of the country of which I am thinking, is called the Aveyron. It has not broken through two ramparts, like the torrent of the Dauphiné, but it has done more. Penetrating a solid mass, it has tunnelled it spirally, turning and re-turning upon itself, and coiling fold upon fold.

Weak at its birth, it is at first but a thin thread of silver laid across the meadows. It warbled and disported, rather than hurried

onward. But gentle as might be the decline, fatally it was drawn adown it. And now, see! it has descended to a field of battle. Farewell to the verdant valley, and its beautiful light! I see the Night hastening towards it. But our child of the south does not hesitate; it courageously plunges, and has disappeared. In the chaos of piled-up rocks everything is confused. The expanded granite of the central plateau of France; the heavy metals, lead, and copper, and iron. The schists and the limestones traversed by their fiery furrows have grown vitrified by coming into contact with them. In their torment, they have hastened onward in convulsive waves,—in the undulations, so to speak, of an irritated gigantic reptile, shrieking and lamenting in its supreme agony.

It is in the heart of this mountain, at so many metallized points, that the Aveyron has accomplished its mighty labour. Everywhere the pages may be seen written in impressive characters; but whatever its patience in the days of calm, or its power in the days of wrath, it has met with resistances too frequently unconquerable. Stone has yielded to it; but the inflexible minerals have borne down its persevering efforts, and remained intact.

Hence has arisen a wholly special style of architecture, strange and capricious. Under the low crypts, and in the gloomy caverns, we think we follow the labour of a miner uncertainly pursuing a vein which flies before him. It has fumbled, and questioned, and excavated, and then abandoned the breaches made in the sides of the mountain, and resumed its sinuous march across the windings of its own labyrinth.

Above these great struggles the landscape is severe. The revolutions of Nature have saddened the country. And for whole hours the contemplative shepherds follow up with motionless glance one knows not what individual object.

And if a woodman's song accompanies the wail of the axe, as the latter strikes at the heart of the oak, it is sad, pitiful, and monotonous.

The torrent, pursuing its undermining operations, has uncoiled its

folds from Najar to Saint Antonin. There it reposes. As at its cradle, the ancient rock offers to it its softened sides. The valley is enlarged, and it lingers within it, doubling its route by gentle sinuosities. But the respite is short. The valley closes up again; work is resumed with more energy than ever. The stone has become iron.

From Lexos to Bruniquet the waters are red of colour; the cliff rears itself like a red wall; the sheep, and the peasant clothed in its wool, are defined in red upon the reddened land. The oaks, obstinately struggling to live on this rebellious soil, stand detached against the sky in the tortured attitudes of "suffering athletes."

Courage, dear current! Swell and contract thy folds! Assist thyself with the greater rapidity of the incline, and be thou conqueror!

The celebrated rocks of Saint Antonin, of Penne, and of Bruniquet, are eternal witnesses to thy labours.

I have pursued the natural path, and descended the Aveyron. But he who would gain a stronger impression ought to remount its course, and slowly follow up its banks. Not in the spring, when all earth is smiling; and not in the summer. In these deep gorges, when the heat is concentrated, the appeals to the storm are too frequent. But in the autumn, which is the true season of travel for these austere scenes, with their grand melancholy shades.

They envelop you all at once. From the luminous plain you pass without transition into the gloomy, narrow gorge which seems to have no issue.

At the entrance of this mysterious world, one does not feel one's-self reässured. The torrent works in its night with hoarse complainings. The bank is scarped; the mountain overhangs it, bristling and threatening, and this not only with its peaks and crumbling stones, but at each turn of the torrent, and at the points most easily defended, a strong castle rears itself on high. From Bruniquet to Villefranche there are thirty planted upon the Aveyron. What were they to the subjacent country? Its guardians, or its oppressors?

See them in their ruins, proud and lofty, and even to-day of sinister aspect; they speak of no good deeds.

Each one of these fastnesses is, as it were, the eyrie of the eagle, which isolates itself, and which hovers on the watch for prey. Woe to him who comes under its tawny eye!

Traveller! cling close to the mountain, and guard thyself from the murderous arquebus. Light as may be thy viaticum, it will tempt him who lies in wait for thee. Thou lookest above, seest nothing, and art reässured. But *he* has caught sight of thee through the thickness of his dumb wall. The arrow is let go;—it is done! No! the Aveyron has concealed him, and placed him safely in its deep caves, from which he will not emerge until the doubtful evening hour, when all things are hidden under the veil of the oaks, and in the vapours of the mist.

Fortunate those who have nothing to do but move onward! In times less remote, times of savage persecution, how many proscribed wretches, who had no longer any tie of country, returned to the torrent, and buried themselves in the recesses of its caverns! Poor birds of night, for whom God had prepared no evening harvest! Often the dawn saw them steal back to their hiding-places weary and famished.

Observe that the sentiment which moves me in my natal torrent is, that notwithstanding its gloom and its wildness, it was at all times the protector of the oppressed.

When the railroad, travelling more quickly than the torrent, shall pierce the buttresses which *it* has sculptured, what will it find? The soul of our fathers completely buried. They had lived there, on issuing from the hands of God. And all which was most truly themselves lies there still, as if on the preceding evening only they had fallen asleep.

They lie there,—with their arts, and their domestic animals. And all seems like an image of peace. The shelter had been a secure one; this is evident from their work, which demanded a

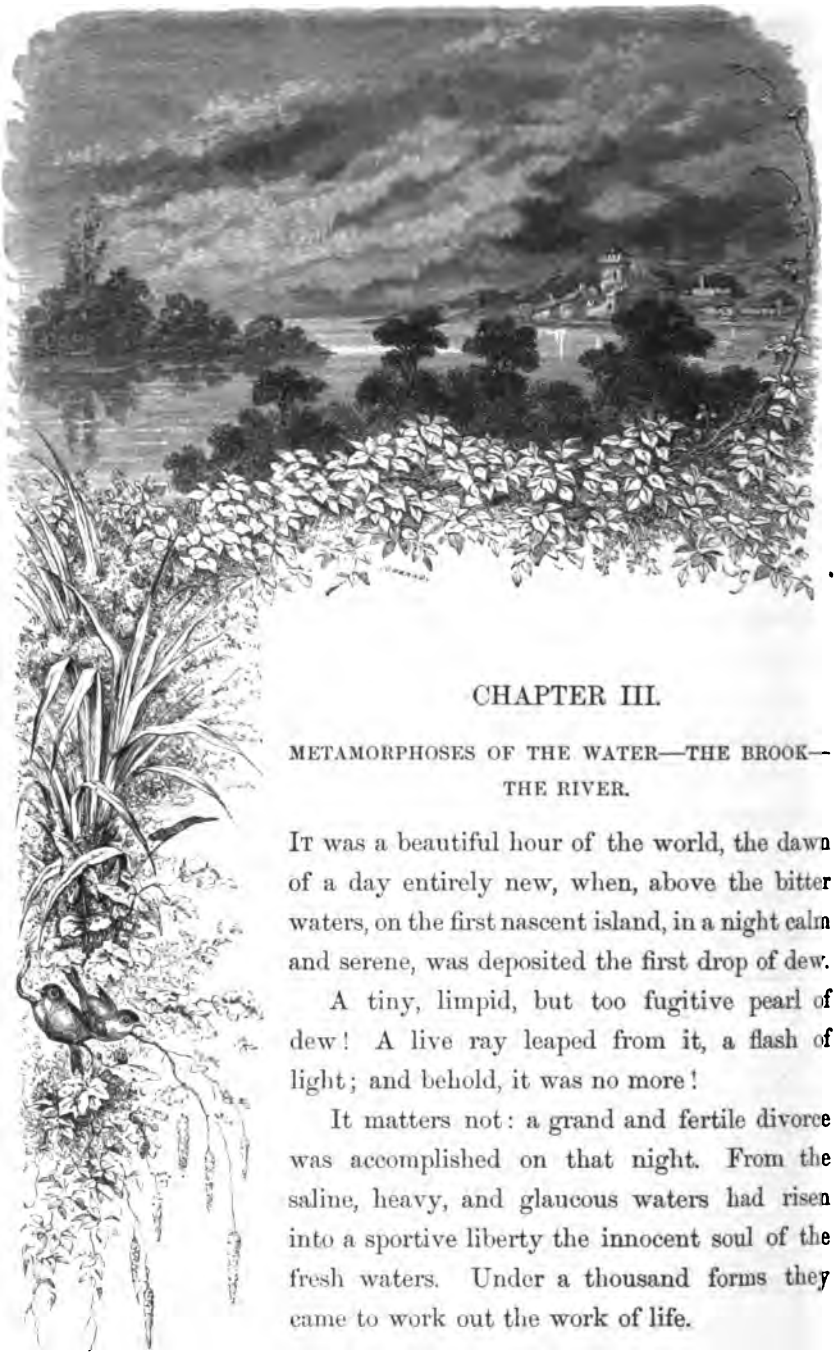
patient labour, considering the ungrateful instruments they made use of.

No one had touched these relics. The sole labour of ages was to increase their number. All around extended the subterranean villages. All around the dôlmens stood erect, and the barrows rose into hills, where the warriors of Gaul and their gods had found repose.

Of all these monuments, caverns, tumuli, dôlmens, few,—how very few!—of us know the meaning. Of the tragic memorials which are elevated on high, the shepherd and the woodman know not the history, and scarcely a few legends.

But that which was the soul of the country, for them has been unable to die, and will never die. That soul is embodied in the wildly melancholy songs which they know by heart, which they constantly preserve, which memory has transmitted from father to son.

This soul it is which lives and answers in the Echo. It passes, and fills the silent oaks with shudders. More plaintively it breathes in the evening wind, and draws a deeper sorrow from the solitary moorland. All will whisper to you: "It is the Spirit!" The Spirit which first inhabited the country,—the Fairy, the "Fado." They fear and yet pursue her; desirous of seeing her as she circles in the clear moonlight around shaking rocks; or, on stormy nights, fantastically dances above the troubled waters of the Aveyron. They feel clearly that she is the queen and the mistress, the ancient ruler of the country; that man is the last comer. Though *he* may disappear, *she* will remain; faithful, until the close of the ages, to her torrent.



## CHAPTER III.

### METAMORPHOSES OF THE WATER—THE BROOK—THE RIVER.

It was a beautiful hour of the world, the dawn of a day entirely new, when, above the bitter waters, on the first nascent island, in a night calm and serene, was deposited the first drop of dew.

A tiny, limpid, but too fugitive pearl of dew! A live ray leaped from it, a flash of light; and behold, it was no more!

It matters not: a grand and fertile divorce was accomplished on that night. From the saline, heavy, and glaucous waters had risen into a sportive liberty the innocent soul of the fresh waters. Under a thousand forms they came to work out the work of life.

Time has moved forward. The little islet, at first scarcely detached from the sea, has risen higher and higher, and enlarged its shores. And now it has become a land so large and lofty, that it scarcely even hears as a feeble echo the voice of the sea which once rolled at its base its continuous sighs.

Who would believe that that voice, so distinct in its personality, was born on the shores where algæ and equisetæ and reeds extend the melancholy of their pale verdure, in which no appearance of change is ever seen?

Upon earth, wherever the fresh water circulates, or even does but betray its presence, how everything grows animated! What a rich variety of tints! With what a profound glance you contemplate those mosses nourished by the moisture of the rock! On the humid meadow, which a bright morning gleam irradiates, how intense is the green, and how you feel that the small, fine, and succulent grass is alive! The trees have flourished above it. Not one is like unto it. The willows and the alders, with their paling foliage, remind us of the melancholies of the sea; but on higher ground, the green poplars spring aloft. By the side of the pensive elm, in the austere shades, light re-issues and re-kindles from the silicious leafage of the oak. On the mountain the fresh verdure of the beech enlivens the sombre fir, and relieves the sadness of its mourning.

Adieu to the monotony of uniform landscapes! The sky above seems every moment changing; whether its deep azure glance pierces through the mists, whether it decorates itself with a mother-of-pearl lustre, or swaddles itself with white fleecy vapours, or whether in the glories of the evening it improvises enchanted palaces, and towers, and fantastic bridges, where the chimeras and winged dragons of another age pass to and fro.

Beneath, the scenes do not shift so rapidly. Whatever seizes on your imagination or fixes your attention, does not vanish like a dream.

The sunken vapours have changed into limpid waters. Earth has caught in them a glance at her physiognomy, and has seen herself for the first time in the mirror of the slumbering lakes.

And through the progress of the waters she, our mother Earth, has

gained a Voice. Long have they seemed petrified and dumb—those high mountains resting motionless under their snows!—but from their awakened waters in the spring-time comes a mighty language. Their vivacity seems a betraying sign of humours, characters,—and I might almost say, of passions. Has Earth then gained a soul?

This hurrying, flowing, or dreaming water is a Proteus, incessantly changing in itself, and in all which it produces. The drop of dew held an infinity, the infinity of an impulse towards the upper life!

In proportion as the earth enlarged, and dispensed its waters upon organized bodies, these waters floated less and less in the form of vapours, and less readily assumed the condition of rain. Our mother, who can endow her children with identical quantities only, will multiply them in no other way than by giving them refined and subtilized forms which the old world had ignored.

Growing lighter than the air, they rise. Supported and directed by its airy pinions, the bird will mount, and traverse the cloud. The lively dragon-fly will skim the water in its jerky flight. The ephemera who is born, lives, and dies in an evening ray, the victim of a cruel destiny,—perhaps of the keen-eyed kingfisher,—still ventures tremblingly towards the shore.

In like mannner, the relieved plant, sympathizing with the light,

detaches from the uniform green of its foliage a certain undefinable little, luminous, coloured organism. It is the flower! And in its aërial forms, its ascending emanations, its pollen which makes so many voyages, this, too—this flower—had wings.

The Wing and the Flower were both born on the same day.

Ah, see with how many graces the fresh water has embellished the Earth! When she is present, the good nymphs, the Plants, with a pathetic charm, mark the diversity of the weather, and the circle of the seasons. The leaf is born, and it falls. The flower expands, and it fades. After the melancholies of the sea, of which we have spoken, other melancholies come into existence. The death and the life which passed away insensibly, to-day are no longer obscure.

But *these* melancholies are full of softness and hidden promises. The leaf only falls, to leave its soul behind in the young bud, its child, and its hope.

In which we shall find our own; the idea, the certainty of our resurrection. We too shall revive, shall bloom again, exalted in stature, and richer in life.

However great may be the Earth's maternal affection, she cannot give to her children all that she receives from the sky—rains, snows, and fogs. Always at a distance from the sea, she perceives no more of it than its damp breath borne upon the winds. In winter these burdened winds sweep closely over her surface, and lighten themselves of their burden in order to reäscend. The trees, at that season, are asleep; the air is satiated with drinking-in the laggard mists. All that descends turns to the Earth's advantage. The rains filter through the soil and penetrate it. They come from the other end of the world, from the great Southern seas, where summer is now prevailing. They have voyaged long, and drank in the rays of the light, the electricity of the storms. They carry with them deep into her interior that which in her profound recesses will feel but little of the glance of the sun, of all which inspires life.

A happy gift, which, in her wise prudence, she for ever guards, stores up, and preserves. In her bosom the fire also circulates, and burning furnaces are at work. Through this cause it is that, in an alternative and regular equilibrium, she raises up or depresses her continents. It is through this means that she respires. But without the help of water, in the expansion of its vapour, this fire would prove but an inert force. With the aid of water impregnated by air and light, the active Earth toils at her internal chemistry. In her mysterious forge she fabricates the metals, and carries out the grand and unbroken law of transformation. And through her volcanic mouths rises her respiration, alternating in warm and prolific vapours.

Of all those waters which Earth has concealed from us, many, nevertheless, must see the light again. Often they come from a distance, accomplishing long subterranean voyages before they can emerge from the night. They long to flow! The winter-frost has sealed up the fountain. The voice of the waters is everywhere dumb. It is the time of repose and sleep. The Earth holds them in concealment, and at rest, until the season of work returns.

Behold, it *has* returned! The fields are again in blossom. The

sky throws off its clouds that the heat may more readily reach us. Everything is now alive, and everything is athirst. Springs, fountains, awake! It seems as if their confused pattering filled the air.

From the hard rock, which I thought all inert, a light fugitive movement escapes which sinks softly into the moss. It is a trail of shining water, just sufficient to slake a bird's appetite. Still less noise is made by the tiny stream which falls in tiny drops, and excavates yonder pretty basin by the weight of her tears.

But the water which issues from below, in eddy and whirl, I know full well. Winter has not been able to arrest *its* course. It matters not that Nature still lies asleep, so far as vegetation is concerned. It is not the clear spring water intended to quench man's thirst—the sober water which filters the light atomic salts of so much usefulness to all organic existence. The daughter of the fiery depths, she bears a burning life. Heavy, and loaded with a frequently repellent odour, one would think her unwholesome. She does not seem to tempt you, but rather to say: "Take care." Not the less is it through this powerful magician, that the Earth, compassionate to all her children, raises them up in their times of weakness, reänimates their

langour, gives them health and strength, and a second time creates them.

Upon this bare mountain, where nothing grows, where the naked rock glitters and burns, what is the meaning of yonder little white flame? It does not go very far, and returns always to the same spot. The sky, which has shone like brass for many months, and the thirsty air, cry aloud for water. I expect to see the little flame ascending and vanishing; but no, it clings to the sides of the mountain as if it would fain re-enter the stone.

And this, because *she* is still there; she who is no more. Formerly, under the leafy screen of the beeches, she glided, and she chattered—the mute captive of to-day—for everything solicited and protected her. The active roots drank from her waters in order to feed the foliage; the leaves in their turn sheltered her from the summer. But the sacrilegious hatchet which felled the beeches has exhausted the tears of the spring. She can no longer reveal herself except by yonder little floating cloud which will not quit her. It is her constant protestation. It says that she is lurking there below; that she is living and waiting in the hope of future escape. Let man but restore to the mountain its clothing, its trees, its meadows, and the stream will gradually reäppear, and throw off the fatal enchantment.

From the gently discharged urn, the brook springs into birth. Its limpid waters descend with a murmur; they travel along their bed of granite. What avail will be its tiny work against so great a resistance? Very little; just so much as the hard silex will be willing to yield it; some atoms, some shining spangles, which, from afar, sparkle against the pebbles. With its tender warble it calls and tempts you. Do not fear it. The mountaineer will tell you what it is worth. It is made of good spring water. It is life. Even in the summer, when the violent breath of the Fœhn abruptly delivers all the waters, and swells the fountains, it does not flow much more quickly. The incline is so gentle, that it scarcely perceives how it is enticed along. It wears

an air of meditation. It wavers from one bank to the other, as if to examine both sides of the pasture it has made so green. The road which it must follow is a long one, and yet how it turns, and twists, and falls back upon itself, ever and ever, as if to lengthen it. And this it does because its course is so very fair. There are so many

lilies spread upon its surface, and the trees spread over it suit a grateful shade! Why should it not delay? I think, however, that it reaches its goal! But, alas, alas, it falls there! It is no more! The land has suddenly failed it. Of all that was, a light vapour only remains. Fallen from so high, and with so little power of resistance, will she ever go lower?

This, notwithstanding, my beloved little brook, is an agreeable variety in your travel—to be carried away for a moment into the atmosphere, to possess wings! "But shall I recover myself again? Alas! what will become of me?"

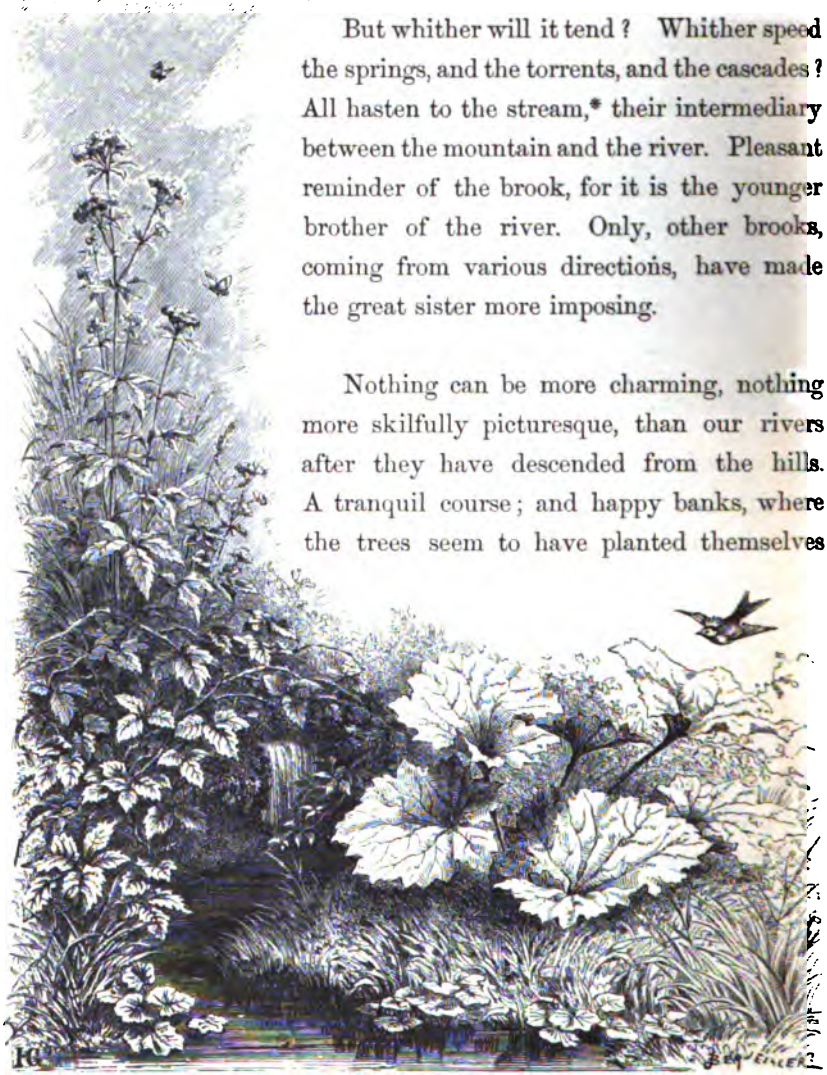
I was reässured as to its fate by the cascades, which, swollen with numerous brooks, shoot downwards, displaying their treasures, or wearily abandoning them all at once.

These have voices of their own, grave or light, plaintive or profound. We fancy we hear a crowd of individuals speaking, whispering, moaning. In the luminous nights they seem to balance themselves fantastically, or they take to flight as if hurried along by some supernatural power beneath the black firs.

**This, too, is but a moment's life for the water, a moment's dream. I hear anew another well-known voice of silvery crystal. It is the brook! It has recovered from its swoon, and flows as if nothing had happened to it.**

But whither will it tend? Whither speed the springs, and the torrents, and the cascades? All hasten to the stream,* their intermediary between the mountain and the river. Pleasant reminder of the brook, for it is the younger brother of the river. Only, other brooks, coming from various directions, have made the great sister more imposing.

Nothing can be more charming, nothing more skilfully picturesque, than our rivers after they have descended from the hills. A tranquil course; and happy banks, where the trees seem to have planted themselves



* [We have no exact distinction in English between *la fleuve* and *la rivière*. I have, therefore, adopted "stream" as an equivalent for the former.—*Translator.*]

spontaneously, where all innocent lives take shelter. You can scarcely hear the waters pass. The good, placid cows, amidst the lofty

herbage, essay to drink, and, motionless, stare at you with large

and dreamy eyes. The small skiff is ready. It will not move very fast. What if I enter it? The solitude is deep, but not imposing. Who would disturb its peace? The emotions it generates are vague and sweet. The tiny flowerets of the meadows which I hold scattered on my knees breathe only a delicate perfume.

Evening already comes; its shades begin to fall. But warm rays traverse them, gliding under the leaves like a luminous dust. The birds know, however, that it will soon be night, for the full-orbed moon is rising, and touching with silvery fingers the ample stream. They seek and summon one another. Their songs seem ended. That which in yonder sequestered nook still sinks and rises has something in it of a complaint. Perhaps the song of a solitary who has no other happiness here below than dreaming, and is mad for love of the light. He salutes with an impassioned accent the waning ray. He mounts, and mounts even higher, in his anxiety to catch another glimpse of it. With wing and voice he darts after that other Love which is fleeing from him.

Day, in effect, is on the point of death. It verily seems as if the river were also conscious of this fact, and forgot to flow. If the leaves did but rustle in my path, I think I could move no further.

Flow on, O river! Flow on, ye hours! Flow always more and more gently, and then down yonder, at the curve of the bank, I shall not see that all is changed!

## CHAPTER IV.

### OUR RIVER:—THE LOIRE.

THE slumberous idyll has ceased to be. I hear the loud voice of the stream awakening. It rolls, powerful, rapid, irresistible; it carries onward in its fulness the forces of a world. With the rivers have come to it all the waters which, under a thousand forms, have traversed the earth. It has taken them up one by one on its route; it carries them on together in a majestic amplitude, in the face of him who created them.

Thus, then, the life of the fresh waters is on the point of terminating. The salt flood, marching towards them, comes to offer union; a solemn marriage, desired and planned by Nature, which at the last hour she seems desirous to retard, and regretfully to consummate.

We do not wish to advance this hour. The great stream is no more a fugitive apparition of the water. Its route is long. Before rendering itself up to the sea, it will sometimes have to traverse an entire continent.

Before arriving, each stream must fulfil its mission. One has created a land at its source; the other, at its mouth, has created a delta. Some have done nothing, either in their upper or lower channel; but they have been great highways open to the advantage of the nations.

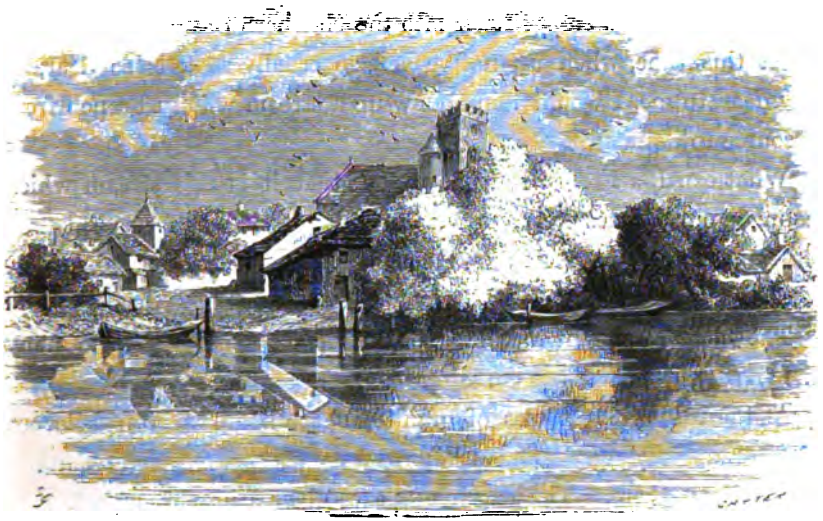
Such is the Thames, which, creating nothing, is content to be the very centre of the world. And at London is situated its laboratory, the mighty furnace of its activity.

A strange and troubling contrast, which interferes with every prevision. This river which, in its upper course, is a sweet monotonous idyll for the dreamers,—this glassy Thames, which has all the air of forgetting itself in a Norman landscape, among picturesque cottages, suddenly changes. In its upper course it is bright with leafy villages: Goring, with its stately church; Pangbourne, and Sunning,—where the torrent rolls lazily under an ancient bridge; Cookham, Maidenhead, Caversham,—a charming retreat; and Walton, with its memories of the Roman spears! Who remembers these when leaving behind the rustic art and gardens of Pope? Behold, it has become majestic with structures, and from its solitary dream sprung into a burning activity! Behold it all aflame, and sown at night with intertwining

sparks—a river of fire! The fogs from on high are in quest of it, and through their white trail the shadows of giants pass and repass in every direction.

But, as soon as it emerges from the bounds of the great metropolis, thick, and sombre, and sorrowful, it glides forward, immense and slow, carrying the burden of its fleets. To the spectator it says: "I am the troubled channel of the world, the river of Humanity."

Our little European world at first allures me. I feel its dimensions harmonized to the proportions of my gaze. Its rivers are not seas of fresh water; if I stray for a moment, I know how to retrace my steps. And yet, those rivers of ours, how they differ



among themselves. How various are their ways, if we do but compare them!

What annoys me is to see that most of them are strangers by their

origin to the country which they traverse, or that they flow far away from the land of their birth. Our Rhone, so French in character, is

Swiss by birth. Our Scheldt, born among the hills of Picardy, becomes Belgian, to empty itself into the Northern Sea.

At this time, when my native soil, so cruelly rent, is so dear, so very dear to me, I would fain follow up a stream wholly French from its source to its mouth.

What can I, a Frenchwoman, say, but that it is *this* stream which has made our France,—its very heart, which itself was formed at first, while its extremities, north and south, were as yet lying expectant under the waters.

The Loire of ancient race was not a torrent, primarily, like so many other rivers.

At the base of the domes of granite, where she was born between the roots, successive lakes have hollowed themselves out, as in Canada. Not to sleep there. The epoch of peaceful creations was past. An agitated soul, already captive under the stone, longed for day and for breathing-space. To the slow, regular upheavals of the first hour succeeded the violent irruption. The waters of the lakes above began to flow; the earth, as if seized by a spirit of emulation, from underground sent up its streams and cataracts of lava. It was, so to speak, the work of a gloomy spirit, of a genius of the shades. Over the gray and tawny granites sweeps the black basalt, covering everything with its funereal gloom.

In this period of birth the waters preside; they stir by the powerful force of their vapour the vast table-land which shall be the centre of France. There, for tens of thousands of years, perhaps, our Loire will labour. Sometimes, in the very middle of the lakes, and from the subterranean furnace, would suddenly protrude a white-hot dyke. All around a hell would boil. The waters, taken by surprise, displaced, hurled back again, made all haste to fly. One heard them hissing; one saw them smoking, like an immense boiler. They must yield the place, however, to the giant, and go on further. And of this the proud and menacing peaks are witnesses, which rear themselves in solitary grandeur upon the dried-up plain.

When, under these Titanic upheavals, the fire itself was buried, the waters, still remaining, began a new kind of work. In wrath with

the very heights created by their own power, they sought to descend. Through the rugged maze of granites and basalts the Loire excavated its channel. Next to the spirit of fire, the spirit of the rock became its torment. It crossed a portion of the Ardèche and of Mont Gerbier, through its weird gorges, by the assistance of its affluents, the Cher and the Allier, whose terrible floods were destined to bear down every obstacle.

It is there—the wild, the dreaded, the unconquerable Loire! Lower down, it appears less gloomy, but still, in its plateau of the Saone and Loire, very austere. It leaps down from it, and enters the level Loiret. It has dearly purchased its peace and its repose. At Blois, scarcely feeling that it is enticed along, it falls into a state of dream. Its slow waters forget themselves among the groves. The

sky, nearly always half-veiled, the warm atmosphere in which one bathes, and which one scarcely feels, the landscape rendered almost monotonous by its tender mildness, seem like an invitation to sleep.

And the delightful castles terraced along its banks, or retiring to some short distance from them, in solitary recesses, behind their screens of poplars,—are they not the abodes of forgetfulness?

What came all our kings to seek here?

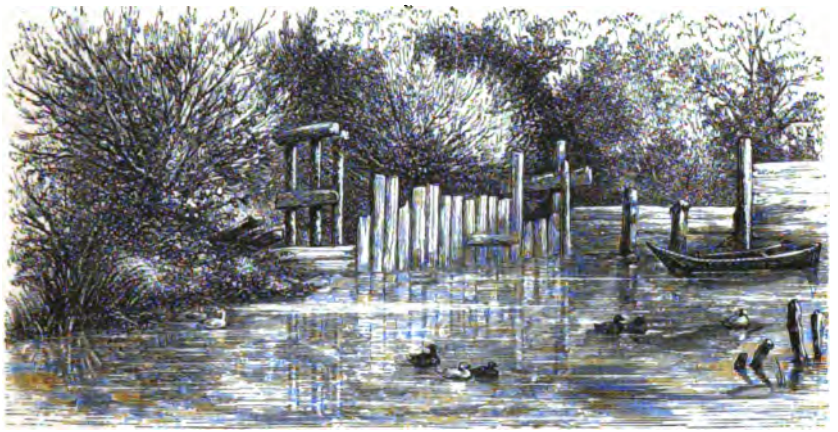
Charles VII. at Amboise, Louis XII. at Blois, Francis I. at Chambord, and the whole race of the Valois? *Too much* forgetfulness,

perhaps; too much refinement in their pleasures. Le Casse has said: "No one feels there any effort or fatigue; and the Italian queens could continue their idle dreams."

A hundred years later, Madame de Sévigné, the lively Burgundian, found this plain of the Loire just the same; and she, too, was never weary of admiring it. "I am in my boat," she writes, "floating in the current, at a long distance from my château." However, she preferred not to be there alone. She was in herself a little too like the beautiful Loire, in its indolent slowness. At Blois, while she wrote "romanesquement" to her daughter, on the river's bank, she heard a thousand

nightingales. At Ingrande, twenty-five leagues lower down, "we have arrived with the same fine weather, the same aspect of the river, and, I believe, the same nightingales." Why does she not take notice of the rude weirs that sometimes obstruct the river's course, and yet are always such pleasant adjuncts of the landscape!

Soon the Loire can advance no further. It is so close to the limit of its course, that it seems as if it must really make all haste. But it has much rather the air of turning back again. These backward coils are not like the undulations of water on its course. Within its folds it embraces the islands, and sleeps in its intertanglements.

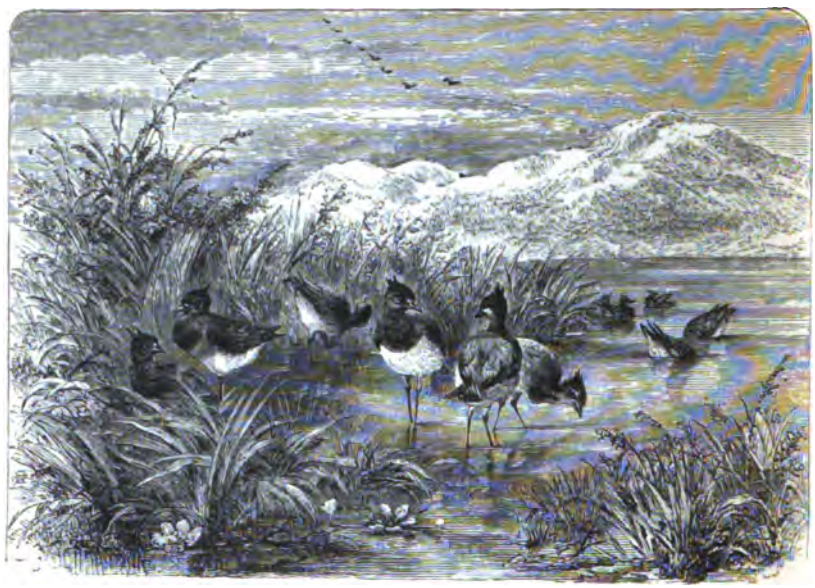


It might be said that the force it still retains, it exhausts by enlarging and extending its bed. Its heavy, muddy waters dragged themselves along, as it was, with considerable difficulty. But is the diminution of the incline its only obstacle?

Is there not a more secret cause for this delay?

I could venture to say, a regret. At all events, a desire for a certain defence or protection against the strong creature which it has come so far to seek. From the distance it has maintained its course, until now it is in face of its destroyer. And as it draws near, observe its indecision; there rises, as it were, a rampart between it and that boundless ocean which is about to absorb it in its infinity.

But delaying too long, it grows weaker still, and it can offer no more resistance. Ocean approaches and entices it; the river follows, and, without knowing it, gives way.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE WORLD-CREATORS:—THE GANGES—THE MISSISSIPPI.

THIS delay of the stream, moreover, creates a world. Having come from on high, from the land of the mountains, it loads itself with the shining tribute of the torrents. The heavier *débris* have remained behind, but the mud agitated by the current remains suspended there, and sinks. The trees also have floated. Thus from afar the great summits deliver up to the waters which furrow them the elements of these new worlds. From the frozen rock, which, for thousands of centuries, perhaps, has stood still under the mantle of snows, issue the springs of renovation. The duration of the planet is only at the cost of an eternal metamorphosis. In what the air, the heat, and the cold have detached from the mountains, in the results of its incessant "moultings," and its partial deaths, Nature, intelligent and fecund, exhibits the germs, the embryos of future continents.

The streams compressed between lofty banks, or favoured by a rapid slope, carry masses of alluvium to the sea. The Ganges, deeply

embedded in the rocks, pours forth, at the epoch of its great floods, a fourth of its weight in mud. Its delta, accordingly, increases every ten days by three thousand feet. The Brahmapootra, its brother and rival, having set out from the other side of the Himalaya, comes just to the same point to deposit its avalanche of mud. These two giants arrive with immense forces; they are at this hour the all-powerful masters. They create, by their united power, a delta of three hundred superficial leagues. The sea, with its feeble tides, feels itself conquered beforehand; it yields. And far away, on its emerald-green surface, float the red waters which are called "oily."

The struggle, however, is but adjourned; it must be *eternal:* at the season of the monsoons, the mountain-storms are appeased, and the river-waters low. The sea takes a terrible revenge. With its accumulated waves, it falls upon the shaking shore; crushes, shatters, dissolves it. For a great distance it carries away the shapeless mud, until it sinks into the fathomless depths.

The work of the Ganges is only delayed. Upon the remains of each season's labour, vast jungles quickly address themselves to the task of springing into impenetrable forests. Man as yet cannot live in them. But for the agile and powerful beast, seldom at rest, nearly always leaping hither and thither,—for the tiger,—they have become a kingdom.

Imposing as may be these streams of Asia, they must submit to the vast arteries which furrow the American solitudes. America, that eldest-born of the world, which might well lay claim to repose, still offers us the image of a young earth in travail. All is there at work. even as in the first hour.

On one side, the West, we have seen the volcanic forces in action; all the Cordilleras, smoking and flaming, traversing the whole of America, from south to north, like a long serpent of fire.

In the East, the empire belongs to the waters. In every direction they furrow the savannahs and the pampas; they modify them incessantly, bringing, taking away, upheaving, or levelling their surface.

In South America, when at certain moments of the year the snows, touched by the sun and penetrated with the hot breath of the volcanoes, melt suddenly, and at once,—when the vapours of the Pacific, passing above the Cordilleras, pour down upon peak and summit, and fall in cataracts on the plain,—then all disappears. An immense shoreless sea extends along the horizon its infinite monotony.

The dry season returns, the flowers reäppear; but not, as in our countries, in scattered groups. On the gray shade of the pampas, under the leafy screen of the virgin forests, entangles and interlaces the labyrinth of their extravasated currents. It is impossible to distinguish what issues from the stream and what returns to it. The Orinoco and the Amazons, through an affluent as large as a river, the Cassiquiare, which falls into the Rio Negro, communicate and mingle with one another, and together feed the whole system of false rivers, false lakes, and bayous.

It is a curious circumstance that all these waters flow or sleep in a gloomy condition, as if heavy with mourning; they drape their banks with black. In the open places there are no birds, life, or animation. Even the mosquitoes keep themselves at a distance. The air which they inhale is irrespirable.

The inquiring seeker, the Christopher Columbus of these solitudes, who attempts to recover his traces in the black Dædalian maze, wanders there alone like a spirit. Nevertheless, some races recently lived in harmony with this strange world, which it ought, at whatever cost, to have preserved.

Humboldt, in a dense forest watered by the Orinoco, found there the cemetery of a people: six hundred skeletons in coffins of palm boughs. Urns of baked clay, with singular serpent-like or crocodile-like handles, preserved the dust of the older dead. A single inhabitant was living, the last representative of a destroyed people. He spoke a language which no one living could understand. Near him an old parrakeet was conversing still with the everlastingly buried soul of the vanished race,—the Aturès.

The few tribes which still linger about the head waters of the Amazons, are constantly ascending higher, and seeking the deepest and remotest solitudes. The desert does not frighten them, nor its perilous tenants. But what they fear, and what they would no longer see, is the pale faces,—who have killed their fathers; whose paleness is not of life; is but its phantom, the apparition of mighty and cruel spirits, which hunt them to slavery or death.

They know what these spirits speak; they have heard them. They speak no more. Silent in their skiff, if they descry at a distance, floating silently along, the friends of their race, they draw forth a flute, and in grave and nearly low voices communicate to one another their thoughts. No others than themselves possess the secret of these plaints, these sighs. Not a single accent is devoted to joy. The major tone does not exist; nothing but the accent of tears. The soul of the *Muros*, like the waters which bear them, seems to have assumed for ever the lament of those who are no more.

Their deep melancholy does not originate only in their misfortunes. Without knowing it, they suffer from the excessive potency of Nature. She, too, is gloomy everywhere, as if overwhelmed by the very excess of her forces. She seeks her life, and cannot recover it on the immensity of the waters. That giant of rivers, the Amazons, as yet has created nothing; or, at the most, a few islands in its channel which will not be of long duration. At its mouth there is no vestige of a delta. It carries everything into the sea, where its current is visible at one hundred leagues from the shore. It may be asserted, perhaps, that its mission is to suppress the barrier between the two oceans; to marry together the Pacific and the Atlantic, in despite of the lofty Cordilleras.

In North America, the hydrographical system seems better ordered. The Mississippi, that first of all labourers, appears everywhere intelligent and active; whether it distributes along its route the overabundance of its fifteen hundred affluents, or whether, in the face of the sea, it extends its colossal delta.

Setting out from on high, from its lake of Itasca, and compressed

at first within abrupt rocks of fantastic forms, it seems a prisoner guarded from above, and without any channel of escape. But as it moves forward, the bastions sink or crumble; soon there remain of them only a few scattered ruins. Between its enlarged banks the captive at length feels that it is free. The grand sanctuary of the oaks, on either side, opens up to it its porticoes. Under their low roofs it extends, and flows without change for more than a hundred leagues, and without any distinctive sign to show you in the morning that you are far from the place where darkness surprised you on the preceding evening.

From all quarters hurry to it, however, the troubled and turbulent waters. Farewell to its silvery limpidity! However broad may be its bed, it cannot contain everything. Happily the soil is no longer, as in the north, a soil of granite. Cavernous landslips contrive underneath it a number of secret outlets. And this process will extend to the creation of a subterranean sea. In the desert of the prairies, which nearly all the year are free from rain, if you dig in the soil you will find the waters rising everywhere, and eager to burst forth.

But even this is not sufficient to relieve it of its burden. It rises continually, and swells, and upheaves its waves in the form of a vaulted roof of from ten to fifteen feet. Its voice resounds like the voice of Ocean. We see it accordingly, at various points, opening up its artery. From these drains escapes a complete net-work of veins, which flow toward the sea. The river, always full and always dominant, sees its children at work. For they, too, labour after their fashion. Gradually upon their mud a new world rises: mobile, fragile —the "trembling prairies," where human foot never dares to tread— but round about which the narrow and light canoe glides in all directions, and already takes possession.

The Mississippi, in a century and a half, has accomplished a mighty work—all Lower Louisiana. In 1700 you would have sought in vain a site for New Orleans. It is now one hundred and ten miles from the river's mouth.

In 1722, Charlevoix saw the soil of the delta formed and solidified in ten years.

Whence came this miracle of rapid creation? Three circumstances combined to accomplish it: materials in an immense quantity, a cement of tenacity sufficient to combine and weld them, and a laborious river wholly abandoned to its own action.

On the banks of the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Ohio, and of all the higher affluents, dense forests covered the soil, having no other enemies than the hurricanes in the season of storms. The trees uprooted by the gale, soon borne downwards under the deluge of the rain, fell into the torrents and the rivers, and being caught by the current, reached the parent-stream in long flowery islands. These improvised gardens defiled rapidly. It was like a charming vision. The sea awaited them. All, however, did not reach it. In the narrow gulfs and windings of the river many were stayed in their progress, and welded together with the shore. And even those which the current impelled to the embouchure, were not hopelessly lost. Higher up, the errant and muddy waters could not have retained them; but lower down, the subterranean stream, created by the superabundance of the waters of the Mississippi, acted in its turn. Loaded already with alluvium at the moment when it disappeared, it was absolutely needful that it should get compensation for its route across the rocks. It arrived with its burden of lime and clay. Freed from its prison of stone, it sought its proper level, and mounted shaft-like, as from an Artesian well, to rejoin the Mississippi, which was, in truth, its very self in its upper course. Its column of water, as it sprung upward, flung around it the mud with which it was charged. An island arose, an island of circular form. From its orifice, instead of lava, issued the viscous, tenacious water; it trickled round about the cone, enlarging it, and rapidly raising it to a height of thirty, with a circumference of fully three hundred feet. Herbs and reeds hastened to push forward. Advanced posts of the mainland, they lived there as they could, on fresh water or brackish water; they intertwined their roots to resist the attacks of the sea, and thus, in time, the island was firmly fixed.

Let us figure to ourselves what occurred when a complete raft arrived before the toiling *Mud Lump*. Immediately, it was caught, bound, and fixed for ever. A ship's anchor, having yielded to the attraction of a *Mud Lump*, it was found on the following day so deeply embedded that a considerable time was spent in getting it free.

If the summit of the crater crumbled, the base remained solid, and was increased by everything that came within its reach. The conical island, having thus gradually become level, was quickly attached to *terra firma*.

Upon this improvised soil, man imitated Nature. To build with stone would have been too long an operation: like the Mississippi, he built in wood; his cities, in twenty years, became so many capitals. To-day, too, the American pioneer who meditates the foundation of a new city in the Far West, sends from Chicago* thousands of ready-made houses, which have only to be planted.

But man has not entered the forest only to erect habitations. He has felled the trees to make fields. The virgin forest recedes before his advance, and scarcely brings any further tribute to the river. The few trees which still occasionally fall in its channel are caught *en route* by the riverine inhabitants. Out of every thousand, not more than two descend to New Orleans.

The Mississippi has seen itself dethroned from its mission. Mud is incessantly pouring down, and always in greater quantities. It increases proportionately the nakedness of the earth. The Missouri alone conveys to it from the Rocky Mountains, from Nebraska, its prairies eight hundred leagues in breadth, wherewith to build a continent. At the melting of the snows, the river is neither more nor less than a torrent of mud. The steam-boat strives, but in vain, to conquer their resistance. The American cannot wait. In the glowing furnace which sets the boiler a-roaring, he casts a barrel of resin; the blue flame rises, and the steamer, shivering like a panting steed, bounds forward with a wonderful impetus. But one knows not whether it

* [Destroyed by fire in October 1871, while these pages were passing through the press.]

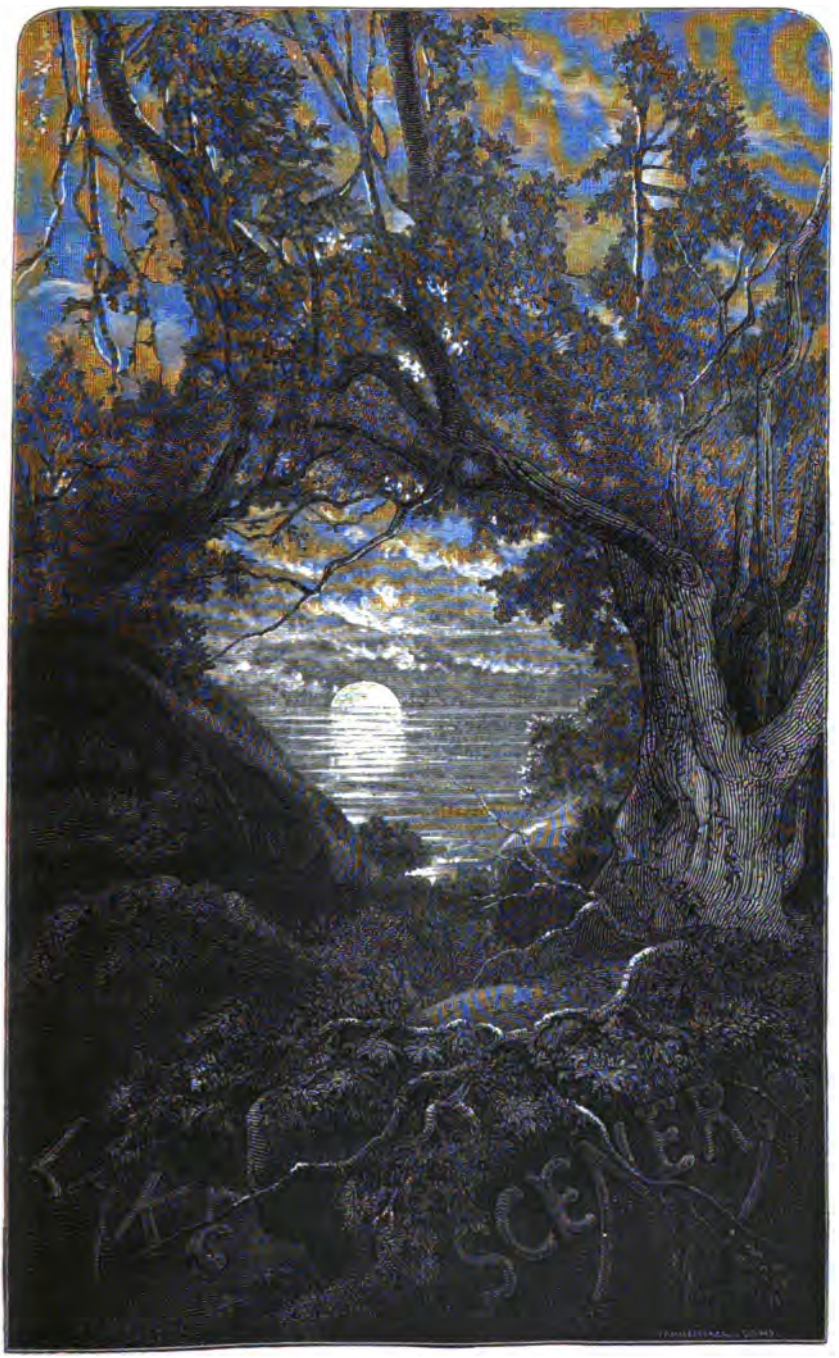
will pass the obstacle, or explode and bury itself under its own fragments.

All these mud-currents descend to the sea; but not so the timber rafts. The riverine current has nothing more to solder. The *Mud Lumps*, less tenacious, submit to the sea, which makes war upon them at the epochs of low-water.

How slow, how sad has creation become! Neither water, nor earth, nor sea. The new shores are no longer shores. The huts of the pilots float on the surface, and their owners drop anchor, lest they should drift out to sea.

In centuries, perhaps, what the Mississippi built up in ten years, will offer the piteous image of things in germ which can take no form, and can never root themselves.

For myself, I prefer to contemplate its upper course, where it can still awaken in me the sentiment of an immense power, where it is still working among its children. In the bright hours of morning, when I see it descend, luminous and rapid, I feel that it exalts and it encourages me, and excites me to action.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE GREAT RESERVOIRS.

THE Lakes, as their generally sinuous form indicates, are the creation of water in motion; the successive aqueous deposits which the great rivers of old time left behind them.

At the epoch when rains were superabundant, and immense avalanches and gigantic glaciers descended from all sides, what would have become of this earth without its prudent reservoirs? It must have perished, inundated. But, owing to these, it slackened the course of its rivers, and prevented them from simultaneously breaking bounds.

In a state of comparative repose, the muddy water deposited its mud, and became pure, luminous, *human*. An harmonized river issued from its bosom, to fertilize the earth instead of ravaging it.

On observing everywhere along the march of the waters the traces of these dried-up lakes, we feel of what

importance they were to the ancient world. They are very seldom solitary, but ranged one below the other, and graduated from terrace to terrace along the circuits of the great rivers.

I do not speak here of the suspended lakes drawn out in the shape of a grand amphitheatre, as we see them in the Pyrenees. These, scarcely kept in by their frail embankments, are too much exposed to perish through a sudden rupture. The little lakes which, on a higher level, enclose the ice, are not destined for a longer duration. The lake of the Grimsel, to cite an example, has dried up through the displacement of its glacier. Moreover, it is the very fall of the glacier which has filled up the lake.

No; I speak of those beautiful reservoirs well protected by dense masses of mountains, and by their own slight elevation. The expan-

sion of the valley which created, preserves them. The waters, as they have extended, have grown slower; they are a check on the progress of the river. This check, or delay, became the security of the earth; and saved it, at far-apart epochs, from two equally formidable scourges.

By man's destruction of their guardian forests, not only have the

waters lost the beautiful law which regulated them, but, at many points of our temperate zone, they have been greatly impoverished. The sea affords as much of vapour as before, the winds which confine them are as regular; but the centres of attraction, the forests, have disappeared. The winds sweep over the bare mountains, and leave no sweet moistures behind them; they hurry afar to pour down their rains. The small quantity which still falls, being no longer "harmonized" by the slow delivery of the lakes, rolls onward to the sea. After the floods, the earth is more thirsty than before them.

I have before my eyes a striking example of the profound disturbance which man may cause, in the circulation of a river, by felling the forests, and permitting it to break through its embankments. Under my windows rolls the Arno. Did I say *roll?* Most frequently, even in winter, it is but a gloomy bed of stones. But a storm passes; a hoarse murmur rises, like the sound of clattering chains. Look! A stream of mud sweeps over the stream of stones. It rises perceptibly; it growls like an Alpine torrent. Quickly does it sweep clear the quays and overthrow the bridges. We turn inquietly towards Falterona, whence it comes. Will not the sky clear in that direction? This menace is always hanging over Florence, and in a few weeks I thrice saw the peril close at hand.

But is this the fault of the Arno? If I turn to the beautiful charts of Fossombroni, I see that it is just the contrary. So far as *it* was concerned, it had tamed its impetuosity by accumulating impediments on its route. Instead of imitating the Tiber, and going directly south, it seems to have bent and curved at pleasure. Through five tortuous and rocky defiles, and through five successive valleys, which necessarily expanded its waters and slackened its speed, it betook itself to the sea.

In an impassioned and fervid outburst, Dante has set it before our eyes.* We see it, we follow it. At first, gnawing away its narrow

* [The passage referred to by Madame Michelet is, I suppose, the famous one in the fourteenth book of the *Purgatorio*. We extract a few lines from Longfellow's version:—

....." Then answered me
He who first spake, 'Thou speakest of the Arno.'

banks, it hastens in the same direction as its brother, the Tiber. The lofty pastoral valley of Casentino soon tempts it to its first repose. It passes on, and at the end of its route begins to excavate. Lower down, Arezzo is opened up; but its race of "surly dogs" irritates the river. It turns its back disdainfully upon them, quits the south, and strikes away northward. This leads it nowhere. Of Italy's two seas,

> And said the other to him: 'Why concealed
> This one the appellation of that river,
> Even as a man doth of things horrible?'
> And thus the shade that questioned was of this
> Himself acquitted: 'I know not; but truly
> 'Tis fit the name of such a valley perish;
> For from its fountain-head (where is so pregnant
> The Alpine mountain whence is cleft Peloro
> That in few places it that mark surpasses),
> To where it yields itself in restoration
> Of what the heaven doth of the sea dry up,
> Whence have the rivers that which goes with them,
> Virtue is like an enemy avoided
> By all, as is a serpent, *through misfortune*
> Of place, or through bad habit that impels them;
> On which account have so transformed their nature
> The dwellers in that miserable valley,
> It seems that Circe had them in her pasture.
> 'Mid ugly swine, of acorns worthier
> Than other food for human use created,
> It first directeth its impoverished way.
> Curs find it thereafter, coming downward,
> More snarling than their puissance demands,
> And turns from them disdainfully its muzzle.
> It goes on falling, and the more it grows,
> The more it finds the dogs becoming wolves,
> *This malediet and misadventurous ditch.*
> Descended then through many a hollow gulf,
> It finds the foxes so replete with fraud,
> They fear no cunning that may master them.
> Nor will I cease because another hears me;
> And well 'twill be for him, if still he mind him
> Of what a truthful spirit to me unravels.
> Thy grandson I behold, who doth become
> A hunter of those wolves upon the bank
> Of the wild stream, and terrifies them all.
> He sells their flesh, it being yet alive;
> Thereafter slaughters them like ancient beeves;
> Many of life, himself of praise, deprives.
> Blood-stained he issues from the dismal forest;
> He leaves it such, a thousand years from now
> In its primeval state 'tis not re-wooded.'"]

the Adriatic lies to the east, and the Mediterranean to the west. It ascends, however, and makes so extraordinary a circuit in sixty miles, that it returns to within four leagues of its source. This is not to avoid any difficulty; for in whatever direction it flows, its course bristles with obstacles. A third repose awaits it on issuing from the Val d'Enfer. But it cannot sleep. The more its waters increase, the more does it find "dogs which are changed into wolves." Piercing through the savage mountains which clasp and strangle it, or hurl it against one another's marble teeth, it bounds, it escapes,—the valiant little river! Nothing can make it recoil; it rushes forward full of ardour, *e cento miglior di corso nol sazia.*

Finally, it decides to turn to the west, towards the Florentine plain; it arrives there a prudent and regulated stream; and flows nobly, slowly, under the noble Florence.

At least, it *once* flowed thus. But, in proportion as the mountains saw themselves despoiled of their woods, the Arno changed its character, until it could be recognized no longer. All rushing down upon it at once,—water, and mud, and stones, and even the very mountain,—it has lost its course, it is like a demented wanderer. So long as the natural barriers lasted which it had raised for its own use, man found it possible to rein it in. But now that these have been swept away, the prudent stream has become the threatening Arno, before it finally changes into the dead river of the Maremma.



It is curious to observe that in each quarter of the world its Lakes preside over the general regularization of the waters.

Asia need hardly arrest our survey. She is singularly impoverished. We know but the miniature lakes of the Cashmere Valley. Lower down, the dykes have been suffered to break. Where formerly beautiful waters gathered, the feverish dreams of the morass now hover to and fro. Asia has its immense rivers, but few or no reservoirs. The so-called Lake Baikal is a salt sea. And all those small lakes which sparkle on the sands of its lofty deserts are also the remains of a sea. They are full of salt; they do not flow. No animal quenches

its thirst in them. No plant flourishes beside them, except the fleshy salsola, which is fed with vapours. They are not green, but of all colours, and full of sparkle; with crystals reflecting the sun, they imitate the ruby, the topaz, the sapphire. At a distance they excite the hopes of the thirsty traveller. They are the springs,—the refreshing waters. Thither he hastens; but it is all a treacherous mirage. Such waters intensify thirst; they burn, they consume you.

And, moreover, in whatever undulations of the soil a little fresh water is concealed, the evil Fairy of the Desert seems jealous of it. The burning sand which the wind raises up and carries away is also eager to drink; but soon it has drank, and absorbed everything.

Africa, so inferior in its organism when compared with Asia, and discovered, as it were, but yesterday, shows us, under the Equator, and further to the south, its lakes letting down its waters by successive sluice-gates. And thence escapes the Sacred River, whose origin was for so long a time concealed,—the powerful yet gentle Nile.

But all these lakes do not seem in action, and between them no rapids and no cataracts occur; no labour appears. Lake Victoria flows towards Lake Albert through a jungle of reeds. At Gondokoro the ground rises, the granite has elevated the plain,—the waters for a moment are all astir. They enter the lake murmurously. The date-palms, waving their crests on the margin of the ravines, say that this is well done of the running tide. A temporary accident; in striking northward from these same lakes, we meet again with sluggish waters. The whole is veiled under an immense carpet of floating plants, stretching far away until lost to sight.

In this burning region the herbs assume a prodigious exuberance. Water cannot remain water; charged with a rich mud, it covers itself with a sea of verdure, a forest of reeds and rushes, tall enough to hide an elephant.

Around the lakes the reedy forest clasps a girdle, which keeps you at a distance. To reach the true lake which lies beyond, you must tread across this swollen mud, at the risk of being engulfed. Bekker,

on the White Nile, found them extending on each side of the river for a width of fifteen hundred feet. The slight declivity of the slope, the comparatively small depression which holds in the waters, and their muddy character, give to all these lakes the appearance of immense marshes. We know not where the lake ends or the river recommences. Whatever may be the floods in the highlands, under the incessant rains of the Equator, all the world seems asleep. The floating meadow softly rises; the forest of reeds and the long locks of the papyrus slowly filtrate and strain through the waters.

The rapid inundations of the Nile are due to its lateral Abyssinian rivers. In its periodical floods, however, it remains faithful to its original character. Without violence and without disturbance it overflows its banks. In a kind of demi-slumber it buries pyramids and temples.

If from these sleepy lakes of Africa, whose embankments are so many filters, we proceed towards the great American nature, we find, in the north, the whole system of lakes at work like the rivers. They seem so many regular organisms which pour their waters into a rapid and living artery. Through valves, alternately contracted and dilated, the waters escape with an irresistible jet.

The great beauty of the Canadian Lakes lies in this effort of contraction. We are reminded of a heart with three lobes. Two of the lakes—Lake Superior and Lake Michigan—contract at the same point, launch through their rapids into Lake Huron—that is, into the third lobe—which, in its turn, pours its contents into the mighty aorta of the St. Lawrence, by the gorgeous Falls of Niagara.

Here the incline of the granitic plateau has not been sufficiently abrupt to create any torrents. But a flood of water is hurled over at one blow. It seems more invincible in its subtly gliding movement than in the torrent which dashes headlong. In the latter there is no attraction. But we cannot regard a rapid without our whole being suffering,—bending back and contracting,—so as not to cede and glide also. It is thus the majestic St. Lawrence flows into the vertigo. A pathetic scene it is to see the Indian in his canoe coldly measuring

the force he is going to conquer, and then launching himself upon the current. With admirable precision he guides the oar. His proud eye of fire is keenly fixed upon the reef, whither the impetus carries him all too strongly. None dare to follow him; we see beforehand, as it were, the feeble boat driven back, and broken into fragments.

The Indian does not tremble.

He is the true son of indomitable Nature, and knows how to prevail over her savage power. You reöpen your eyes, you look,—but it is just as if a lightning-flash had passed! It has since turned from it many others.

These beautiful and all-living lakes, at the point where they contract, bear a close resemblance to the seas. Lake Superior is of the same area as France. He who navigates it acquires the idea of an immense but uniform and monotonous force. With eyes and thoughts he seeks for the already distant shore. Soon it will have completely disappeared.

## CHAPTER II.

### INTERIOR CHARACTER OF OUR ALPINE LAKES.

Asia has only dead lakes; Africa, sleeping lakes; America, fresh-water seas; Europe alone has those specially intimate lakes which all the world goes to see and admire.

The sinuous Italian lakes do not possess, however, the charm of mystery. The shadows keep at a distance from their laughing mirrors. They reflect but the joys of the light, the fairy gleam of their flowery gardens and orange-groves. Around and about, upon hills rising in terraces like an amphitheatre, villas are being planted in every direction. Under their open porticoes, where the light air plays, penetrates the deep blue of the sky in happy gleams and glimpses. O enchanting scenes! where life, as one feels, flows by easily and happily. Too easily, it may be! The soul, in its un-

shackled freedom, apparently enjoys this paradise without taking full possession of it. The gaze wanders elsewhere, to mundane diversions. Upon many villas I have read amusing or comical devices, as, for instance:—

*Rideo quia video;*
and,
*L'austerité seule fait le recueillement.*

[I smile, because I see;
and,
Austerity alone begets reflection.]

It is necessary for us to climb the mountain which, from its four sides, pours forth the great family of the waters,—the venerable Saint Gothard. On the Swiss declivity, everything already is clothed in mist; but it has not risen half-way in the elevated canton of Uri. Owing to this very elevation, and to its forty little lakes which reflect for its behoof the sky, the canton is comparatively free from vapours.

It lies much lower at the foot of Saint Gothard, where a strong impression awaits us. Around this father of waters the grand assembly of anxious mountains has gathered, as if to hold counsel; and their long grave shadows have descended into the valleys. The black firs, massed together in forests, extinguish, too, the light upon their mantle of woe, and thicken the shades.

Let us pause awhile. Is not this silent and secluded spot the sanctuary of the Alps? Here, hewn out by four blows from a hero's sword, the Lake of Lucerne extends its arms like a cross. Just as from Saint Gothard flow towards Europe the four rivers, so does the lake, with its four open arms, apparently desire to penetrate the mountains, and to carry far away the awakening and revival of its waters.

This diametric form is peculiar to it; sets it apart from all other lakes. It does not allow you to regard its branches as an *ensemble*. Each of them, darkling in the distance, and in its depths, flings at you in passing the attraction of its mystery, and then discloses it. It summons you, and then defends itself. There is no route along its banks, and on its waters the storm too often broods. In the centre

it is abruptly closed. On each side the mountains haughtily press, as if to an encounter. They bar the road to one another, and then cross each other like two champions who, in a first onset, overpass the goal. The narrow passage which we formerly perceived exists no longer. We cannot go further. And yet we advance: we are anxious to see. Is it an illusion? It seems as if a little daylight were visible beyond. Scarcely, perhaps, anything more than a fissure. The charm dies away. The idea of battle wanes. Behold, you have passed to the other side!

To be enchanted by the magic of this grim channel, you should not set out from the Saint Gothard, but from Lucerne. Starting hence, if you disregard on the right the black guardian of the river,—the dry, stony, sharply-chiselled Mount Pilate,—which fixes you with its sombre gaze, your eyes will gladly escape to the wooded, rustic bank on the other side. But you have passed beyond Pilate. The boat bears you swiftly. You pause at Flüelen. The arm of Stanz plunges to the right; you discern two white gleams struggling with the shadows. A vision no sooner seen than departed! Opposite to you behold Kusnacht, which sinks deep into its mystery of verdure. You leave it on the left. Why do you halt elsewhere, at the common landing-places? If possible, prosecute your voyage without touching at the shores. Go straight before you, to the very end, where the peak rises precipitously like a wall, and apparently terminates the scene. There Brunen conceals itself, poor shelter of the poorest of cantons, where the hand of Man has done nothing to embellish Nature! It does not stand in want of human help. At Brunen, it is not Brunen which we see, but that which with its majesty inspires the whole landscape,—the sombre, the wild, the solitary Lake of Uri. Confined by its lofty rocky banks, it is a captive, but not a silent and slumbering one. My heart is full of sighs. The burning wind, the terrible Fœhn, has suddenly swooped down upon it. An enemy, and not alone! In the opposite quarter, a frozen and not less terrible wind descends upon the gloomy table-land of Einsiedeln. These two blind spirits, growing savage in the combat, mingle the waters in their struggles. They lash them, they pluck them away from one

another, they drive and whirl them in the air. Apparently they would escape along the flanks of the inaccessible rocks, which fling them back again with long, hoarse mutterings.

Such is Nature, and such is Man. Both are heroic. Which is the greater? To set forth in a boat at night, and leap out upon that tiny meadow-land of Grütli, which is, in reality, but a narrow bit of turf suspended to a precipitous wall—why, this was no ordinary deed! A thousand feet beneath, for him who had missed his footing, a grave lay ready. And if a storm had burst forth, and lasted, it had been the resting-place of the three heroes of Swiss Independence. Above, there was no pity, and no possible chance of flight.

A few steps further, however, and the tempest, on one occasion, proved salvation. But only a true child of the mountain—a William Tell—could push back his boat with a single stroke, and scale the impossible staircase with a few chamois-like leaps.

You forget these tragedies of human history when the extremity of the lake reveals itself to you in a summer day's beauty, when it sinks into warm shadows, calm and composed. You feel then as if you were at the entrance of a temple.

An invalid, I have spent in a profound solitude, not days only, but long, feverish nights, seated at my little window, with nothing but the waves before me. The moon rose slowly. From the point which she reached about midnight, she enkindled the centre of the lake. Her rays strongly marked out the abrupt projections of the rocky walls. It was like a torch which slowly passes under a nave, and in so doing completely changes it, throws forward the lights and shadows, brings out the mysteries and the revelations. So grand was the vision, and so full of mystery, that in fathoming its depths I felt a shudder come upon me, and, at intervals, I covered my face with folded hands.

When one is afar from this sublime Nature, having retired to the grim shadows of the Northern regions, and descended through the Furca into the narrow corridor of the Valais, one falls

immediately into the very light, before the splendid mirror of the Leman.

There is nothing in the latter to remind us of the scene we have just quitted. The Lake of Lucerne, whose form gives the idea of a violent action, nevertheless does not seem like water in progress. With the exception of the arm which pours out the Reuss at Lucerne, the others seem to lie asleep under their fields of reeds.

The Leman, on the contrary, offers the image of flowing water. It has all the undulating curve of a stream. On its issuing from the Valais, where it was closely compressed by the abrupt rocks, it spreads

itself wholly towards the charming country of the Vaud, as if to change the vision.

On this side it attempts but little resistance. At leisure, and gently, it labours, it sculptures, it rounds itself into a beautiful crescent. Upon this agreeable Vaudois shore, wherever the filial hand of Man has embellished Nature, the landscape stretches softly, and in repose, under the light, free shadows. Through the hills, which descend to the very margin of the lake, through their forests, their meadows, their orchards, it decorates itself with a charm, with an indefinable feeling of humanity, which fixes your attention and appeals to your heart.

It possesses two very different aspects. At bottom, at the entrance of the Valais, in the hot summer-days, it becomes an Italian lake, and rekindles with dazzling brightness. Towards Geneva all grows cold again. The Jura draws, far back in the rear, its black curtain of firs; on the other shore, the mountains of Savoy extend in the distance their dismantled fortresses. The lake is henceforth

without protection. Under the icy north wind it trembles every moment.

Its nobleness, its true grandeur rises with its shores. On setting out from Lausanne, each step is a revelation of its serious gracefulness, or of its austerity. It constantly changes its effects, partly in itself, and partly through fugitive glimpses of the mysterious valley whence it comes.

It is from Vevay that you obtain the first magical *coup d'œil*. Less through the lake than through the white vision which rears itself afar in the depths. Apparently it wishes to reveal to you whence those blue waters come which lie at your very feet. It is at first the promontory of the Velan which rears its mass aloft; beneath, the Saint Bernard, heavy and dull, rounds its dome of ice; other less-known giants lift up their heads, as if to look upon you.

Nearer at hand, seated on their throne of granite, the seven wise virgins (commonly called the *Dents du Midi*), haughty, and planted in the front rank, preserve the world of glaciers.

If you move towards Clarens, the vision sinks and disappears. The internal character of the lake seizes fully upon you. The mountains of Arvels, which rise in the background, upright as the walls of a temple, confer upon it a religious grandeur. We must not remain in the low village of Vernex; we must climb the acclivity to Montreux, right up to its little terrace. Having arrived at this unique spot, halt! Not for a day only, but for days, for months. Return in different seasons. He who only passes through it will be unable to say that he has known it.

This terrace of Montreux, like the lake, is of a semicircular form. From whatever point we view it, the picture changes, and is transformed. If, from the radiance of the west, which is always without mystery, you turn to the east, everything is veiled. The mountains in the one direction are no longer thrown back to the second plane; they fall down to the shore, they shut in and concentrate the landscape. Through a beautiful and singular privilege, the landscape is not, on this account, uniform. It incessantly changes and varies its aspects, according to the hour of the day and the condition of the sky. In

the morning, under the silvery moistures, the lake unfolds its loveliness; higher up, on the mountain-slopes, the obscure foliage of the walnuts, the bright leafage of the vine, show the most undefined outlines. Everything seems to swim in this warm bath of vapour, as in the primary age of a world. Therefrom rises a certain indefinable spirit of benediction. It is a festival, at which all Nature joins in the chant,—the air, the water, the light, the birds which fly across each other's path. Listen to the warbling of the swallows. I never heard in their voice a more grateful cadence.

In the evening, all has changed. The luminous landscape of the morning has retired into the shadow. But the shadow is not cold. Rather, the reddish-brown hues seem those of an imperfectly extinguished conflagration. They have imbibed the flame of a long summer's day. They are full of warm gleams, of impassioned lustre.

It is six o'clock—the hour of silence. At sunset, everything sparkles. To compose ourselves, we are better here, resting against the gray wall of the little monastery, and under these screens of verdure. The season of flowers is past, and the songs of the birds are over. Do not regret them. This tranquillity and these grand trees embellish the place most nobly. At a short distance off, a little fountain bubbles; but it is scarcely as loud as the warbling of the fledgling while still in its nest. And far away, among the gloomy pastures, a single and a melancholy bird is on the watch.

Lower down, at our feet, under the heavy shadow of the walnuts, lies sunken what was once supposed to be a crypt of the church from on high, but which the water has built slowly with its tears. They are ever flowing, drop by drop, but so silently that you would

not think they fell, if the moss underneath was not agitated by a slight shudder.

These fine effects were particularly conspicuous one evening when a storm was threatening. The lake no longer shone. It waited, motionless and gloomy, without reflections. The light seemed to come from the earth, and the landscape depicted itself in its smallest details. The river was outlined in its sweetest tenderness. You could see it winding off into little gulfs, which seemed to be sculptured by the living hand of an artist. Above, the meadows, the great woods, the well-ordered terraces, deepened their tints. What a rest for the eye in this dark, deep green, this pacification of the day!

I saw this spectacle years ago; but I cannot forget it. Two of us were traversing the ascent of Ghin, silent, a little moved, but disregarding the downfall of the large drops of a warm electric rain. Each clap of thunder was followed by a long interval of silence. It was the eve of a festival. The doors of the church were still open; and there issued the sounds of an organ mingled with a woman's voice. A simple, gentle psalm, subdued, a little too uniform, but so well in harmony with the hour, with the expectation of Nature, with the condition of our souls. We seated ourselves to listen; and gradually I felt new springs awakening within me. I felt them mounting from the heart, and subduing my aridity.

Let us be just, however. The beauty of this shore is partly due to its strong contrast with the opposite one. The mountains of Savoy do not undulate to the lake; they swoop upon it perpendicularly from all their height. The morning excepted, when the sun strikes upon them, and reveals their broken outlines, they extend, for the remainder of the day, like a long, gloomy wall, beyond which nothing is visible. This, for the Vaudois shore, becomes an imposing *vis à vis*, of a severe grandeur. More than one sick heart has felt itself strengthened by its austerity.

I know well that if we cross the lake in front of Lausanne, and land

at Evian, the scene is no longer the same. Nature is ever serious, is adorned with a pathetic gracefulness, with a certain smile of subdued suffering, such as we often discern in the young Savoyard, half checked at the corner of his mouth. The rays of light even in summer glide forward, rather than pause in their course. Poor Savoy! Winter buried it under the snows, and these snows do not preserve it. It feels only too keenly the cold breath of the giant enthroned in the

rear on his seat of ice. The summer is late in visiting it, and has never much intensity. It has but a month to grow and ripen its fruits and its harvests. These severities of the mountain, these pallid gleams of the light, do not give it, however, an impoverished aspect. The soft, half-luminous mists of the lake seem to supplement, to reverberate the feeble heat. The leaves everywhere open out large and succulent; the wild plants are completely, as it were, at home. The

hedges, in their compact rows, have all the air of dwarf forests, where everything intertwines and entangles, growing freely as it will.

The vines, less productive than their Vaudois sisters, make a treasure, a wealth, out of their verdure. On every side they fall back, and droop along the roads. You walk, as through a fine park-like avenue, from Evian to Amphion; the latter, a charming nest, where the sweet shade falls from grand, paternal chestnuts.

We must retrace our steps, and mount in the direction of the Valais, to re-discover the darkened character of that shore. Meillerie, two paces distant from the pleasant fields of Evian, with its black rocks and obscure nooks, conceals from our eyes the world. A locality not well adapted to heal the soul! If the grief be deep, the place is too secluded. When St. Preux,* from the beneficent heights which soothed him into tranquillity, returns, and re-descends, and shuts himself up in this grim, desolate solitude, he feels himself once more attacked by the trouble of his passion. He wanders into the chaos of rocks overthrown, he seeks in vain against himself a shelter and a refuge. Nature? she too is wounded, and can offer no consolation. Far from it; she concentrates and exalts his suffering, envenoms the arrow, and thrusts it deeper into the wound. In the narrow circle of these ruins the air is deficient, and the oppressed respiration adds storm to storm.

* [The hero of Rousseau's romance of "Émile." In this connection we may quote Byron's admirable sonnet:—

"Rousseau—Voltaire—our Gibbon—and De Staël—
Leman! these names are worthy of thy shore,
Thy shore of names like these! wert thou no more,
Their memory thy remembrance would recall:
To them thy banks were lovely as to all,
But they have made them lovelier, for the lore
Of mighty minds doth hallow in the core
Of human hearts the ruin of a wall
Where dwelt the wise and wondrous; but by *thee*
How much more, Lake of Beauty! do we feel,
In swiftly gliding o'er thy crystal sea,
The wild glow of that not ungentle zeal,
Which of the heirs of immortality
Is proud, and makes the breath of glory real!"]

Byron has said: "The landscape is too grand for an individual love." He might have added, in reference to the Vaudois shore, that there the light is too great; while here, the shadows are too heavy.

The season is advanced; the vines of Montreux have yielded up their clusters; the mountain-beeches begin to redden; the walnuts on the lower levels are shedding their foliage. Let us repass the lake; we shall have no more occasion to shun the splendour of the light. The day breaks late (10th October); the dawn kindles without vivacity.

"It is just upon six o'clock, and still everything is at rest. The mountains wear all the paleness of sleep. The slumbering lake in its peaceful mirror reproduces their image. The air is agitated, at intervals only, by the heavy flight of the crows, which emerge from their nocturnal shelter, fly out of the Valais, and bend their track for labour towards Lausanne. A soft light rises and wakens the sparrows under the roofs.

"At this moment, the second Dent du Midi lightens up, like a smile reviving on a grave countenance. The point of the Chaumière is illuminated, and little by little all the peaks. The mountain, but for these rays, would already be clothed in gloom. Ten days have scarcely passed by, and the landscape already bears no resemblance to its former aspect. The rains of autumn, on the summits, have fallen as snow. Day breaks at nearly the same hour, but with much less lustre. It is a sickly light, as if veiled by a screen, and is little adapted to awaken life.

"But the afternoons are still externally mild, and walking abroad is delicious. The road which I choose from preference, when I go alone, leads me to the graveyard of Clarens. To-day the weather is unpromising, though I can see no sign of storm. Not a breath of air disturbs the composed expression of the landscape; and everything in Nature seems mild and maternal. Yet it is in this month that the landscape is completed: alas! too often, the harvest of life. And,

I know not why, but this month, instead of saddening, consoles me. It awakens in the soul a thousand tender recollections. It is truly the time of the grave. So many things lie deposited in the cemetery of the heart, in its deepest depths, which, towards evening, reäscend. But, mark you, without violence, without pain. There is no need to put your hand upon your heart to hush its throbbings; it beats gently, gently, like the pendulum of Time at this season of expiring lives. A sweet agreement exists between the melancholies of Nature and those of the soul.

"……There is no one in the graveyard. The rain begins to fall. Each drop of water on the last roses, on the pale asters in semi-mourning, awakens a light shudder. The silence seems to me more profound. Under each of these stones some one sleeps.

"No site is better chosen to relieve death of its sadness, and to elevate above the sombre mystery the promise and the hope of the Beyond. Sheltered from the north by a pleasant vine-clad hill, it encircles itself with green meadows and winding pathways, which the peasant-girl treads with light elastic step. On the east, a clump

of trees, the last remains of long-regretted shadows, conceals from us to some extent the austerities of the mountain under the snows of winter. To the south and the west no barriers intervene. You see the lake expanding gently, and disentangling its luminous folds. At the hour of sunset, when it sinks behind the Jura, the waters kindle with all the glories of the evening. They prolong the serenity of the day. Night in this direction has scarcely come.

"While wandering amongst these tombs, I said: 'Is the word of hope or of faith the same for all the world; or, rather, is each soul marked by a particular seal on returning to God?'

"Many seem to have regretted nothing; they have gone on their long journey rich in their belief. But here some timid soul has doubted, has trembled before the great passage. It has been found needful to reässure it: 'Do not fear! I have purchased thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.' An appeal of love, but one which saddens and disturbs the spirit. I prefer the beautiful epitaph of the child who goes forth alone on one light wing: 'I am from above.' Later in life, alas! we are too much from below, 'of the earth, earthy.' We cling to it through a feeling of individual selfishness. Though we seek to disengage ourselves, to go to God utterly free from shackle, we leave a something behind which delays us and fills us with regret.

"A month ago, the graveyard was still covered with flowers. The roses, the jasmines, the tuberoses spread abroad their penetrating perfumes. All these flowers are faded. And now it is only the leaves which, through their lively autumn colourings, decorate and rekindle the tombs. The most solitary are, through a strength of their own, maintaining their decoration. The marble has lost its coldness, and rises with a certain degree of warmth above the maze of the russet-brown foliage.

"Everywhere on the tombstones I read the names of strangers. Coming from the fogs of the North to enjoy a softer winter, they have never returned. Dear as may have been their fatherland, and dear all that which they loved there, they have found it delightful to take repose in this sweet spot. And others, too, in time will rest in it. So great is the charm of the scene that all come here to live, and more than one wishes to die."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SCOTTISH LAKES.

ONE thing is wanting, however, to complete the perfect beauty of our Swiss lakes. In the midst of their waters no shady isle have they, like a solitary refuge in those hours when Nature alone has the power of softening our wounds. There is only the one little islet of Saint Pierre in the Lake of Brienne.

In Scotland, on the contrary, islands everywhere abound. Loch Lomond of herself can number two and thirty, all varying in their aspect. Some are gay with a half-smile under the verdure of their meadows; others are vaporous and melancholy, under the paleness of their birches, or veiled with the funereal gloom of their centenary yews. Sometimes it is simply an abrupt, isolated rock, which rises above the waters, in its bareness and ruggedness.

At the end of each lake usually dominates a solitary mountain

(or *Ben*), pointed like an obelisk, rounded as a dome, or elevated as a tower. These peaks are composed of red granite, or of a bluish-black slate. Against the leaden-coloured sky they detach themselves like so many solitary sentinels, each apparently charged to watch over his own clan. Nowhere is vegetation apparent. The elements have chosen their summits as their fields of battle. At the end of the narrow and tortuous defile which the lake occupies, they summon, of their own accord, as it were, the winds to engage them in open fight. The wounds they receive are only too perceptible. The thunder and the lightning, too, have chosen them out. Above the green waters of Loch Awe, with its eternal storms, the livid phantom of Ben Cruachan outlines his threefold crest, vitrified by the lightning strokes.

But beneath, in the folds and hollows of the acclivities, the mosses have pushed forward. Lower down, mixed with heather, they have wrought a compact net-work which detains everything, the mists and the rains. But mountains of hard granite and black basalt are never interpenetrated. They throw off all the waters that descend upon them; and in floods and cascades these would come down with a rush, if, half-way, they did not encounter the bed of the peaty mosses, which arrest and concentrate them. On the edge of each tiny leaf hangs a pearl-like drop. With their accumulated weight they resume their downward course, but slowly, and filtered, just as the fountain slowly filters from the rock.

These lakes, which frequently follow in close succession, separated only by low narrow isthmuses, point out to us the original geological character of Scotland—a series of islands proceeding from north to south. Some openings on the boundary of Caithness and Sutherland reünite in one the lakes which divide and dispose anew, each after its own fashion, this wild world, where Nature would fain have been alone with herself.

Descending southward, the five lakes of the Caledonian Canal, which the ships traverse by means of locks, like a natural staircase, define a second island. And the Forth and Clyde, traversing

Scotland in the south, from Glasgow to a point near Edinburgh, divides it into a third, and separates the Highlands from the Lowlands.

All these lakes, in fact, owing to their closed-in shores, and their serpentine form, which recedes and sinks afar into the defiles of the mountains, are not so much basins of repose, as waters *on the march*, arrested and isolated by alluvial masses.

To reach them, you must follow up the uneven and winding bottom which was formerly their bed. Humid and gloomy, it seems as if it would lead you into the night, and behold! suddenly, after many

curves and angles, you find yourself in front of a pale mirror! Formerly it would but have prolonged to your eye the shadows. On its borders vast sycamores and ancient chestnut-trees intermingled their branches. Above, extended the mists. But the trees have fallen, the last of the Highlands has departed; the mists alone have remained. The vapours spreading over the desert make sport of the absent life. They float, or they glide slowly. In fact, they are no longer vapours, but long white robes, which seem to veil human forms. In this land of regrets, where the heart is for ever seeking an object to love, is it not *she* who passes? If it were not, she would

have fled; a light and changeful shadow would already have ceased to be. But *she* remains invariably the same. The changing folds of her long vestments enable you all the better to recognize her. She also sees *you*, recognizes you, and is unable to escape.

Beneficent visions of solitude, how quickly they oppress the heart! They are fixed, they are persistent; you feel as if you could actually seize them. And the hands stretch forward, and clasp together. In vain. Upon the Western fiords, which might almost be called lakes, and which are like arms thrust forward into the island by the sea, the scene, still more heavily laden with shadows, is, however, much more animated. Upon the waters, the boats are constantly crossing each other's track. In the air, the mists have expanded into great clouds of capricious and fantastic forms, which labour with tempests. Through the labyrinth of islands (the Hebrides) which forms a girdle for Scotland, the passionate waters, swollen by the warmth of the Gulf Stream, seek a channel with whirl and eddy, grow wrathful against obstacles, dash themselves against the reefs, and send up to the sky their spray and foam.

From the east the cold Northern Sea flings across the island its high and frozen gale. It plunges into these warm vapours, which have risen in the air, and seizes upon them. The invisible clouds now assume a substance, and enter into strife. You can see them

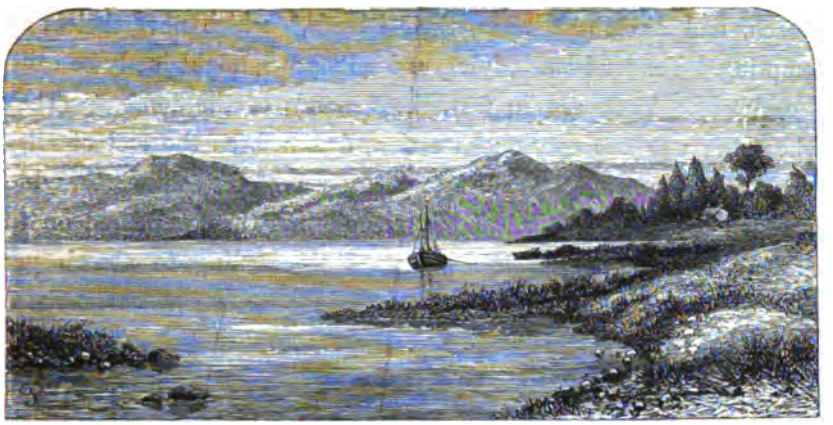
dash against each other, in pursuit or in flight,—black dragons with yawning jaws—long serpents with coppery scales, which emit the ghastliest gleams as they glide along.

Long seated upon the sombre shores, we have listened to their tempests. From such majestic voices let us now return to the still and melancholy.

Among the mountains each lake lies like a world apart, with associations peculiar to it, that Time has been unable to efface.

Loch Lomond, on the boundary of the Highlands, is the first to attract us. Embellished with its islands and its pretty hamlets, it exhibits a rural and almost gentle character in its evening effects, when it kindles into a pale gold which has no warmth. At this hour the herds grow lively. They troop along the sunlit slopes; gradually the birds also descend, and salute with their warblings the last rays of twilight. The timid kid still lingers, afraid to quit its daytime solitudes. In the dim mystery of the twilight it will come down to feed, half-plunged in the water, on its favourite plants.

In this calm landscape, turned towards the uniform horizon of the Lowlands, neither legend nor story has assumed an heroic character.



They are simply recitals of adventures, of the gallant deeds of noble brigands—alternately mere robbers or men of business, treating for peace with their plundered lords.

On the shore of the lake is pointed out to you the half-concealed cavern of Rob Roy, where that popular hero meditated over his exploits. And every now and then you come upon some pleasant sylvan picture,—woodland, water, and hamlet,—which it is the happiness of the artist to transfer to his eloquent canvas.

But the desert is close at hand. You must traverse it to pass from Loch Lomond to LOCH KATRINE, which the Highlands hide away in their deep recesses. Yet it is not buried *alone* in their savage solitude; other lakes, grouped around, are also defended by the chaos of ruins which the huge Bens have deposited about their feet. They seem to have accumulated these masses on purpose to arrest the stranger's progress. Upon their very shores a rugged cincture guards the lakes still more effectively, and sets them apart from the world.

Too much apart! There is no life in their waters; no boat to approach, and disembark upon, their islands,* which nevertheless are tempting. Yonder islands, lying under its yews, might justly be called a cemetery. They are, in fact, the "islands of the tombs." Those whose life was one continuous action, dreamed, as the end of all, of a profound sleep, and for their last pillow sought the solid earth, which would never betray them. Long enough had they wandered on the shifting soil of the quagmires, always threatening to absorb you.

These brave men have had enough of mountain-visions. The mountain preserved their existence in its recesses, but too frequently disturbed their minds. Those detached blocks, gnawed at by the elements,—those indifferent peaks,—have always shown through the gray mists like capricious, irritated, wicked countenances. The solitary islands, guarded by the deep water, which no storm disturbs, are better calculated for peace.

Through a singular contrast, these lakes, apparently so well-protected, and almost chained in slumber, heard, century after century, upon their banks the loud shouts of war. The conditions which defended *them*, defended also their country against the stranger. In the mountains Scotland found its true fortress, against whose ramparts the

* [This is not correct, so far as relates to Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine.]

floods of invasion were shattered. From all quarters they poured in upon her. From north and east, under the pirate-kings of Scandinavia. From the west, through the sea of rocks and reefs, came in their turn the rulers of the tempest, the Lords of the Isles, haughty of spirit, and eager after battle.—The fiords, deep in the mists, lead them into the very heart of the country. But on the moorland lies only the immovable heather. No living creature rises at the sound of their steps. They advance, they penetrate into these defiles strewn with ruins, which are the avenues of the lakes.

Suddenly, upon the desert shore, the horn resounds! The fatal echoes awake, and prolong the shrill summons or warning. Can yonder lake, then, or yonder islands, be inhabited? A boat starts forth, gliding like the bird whose wing is open to the wind. It touches land, under the yews. In a moment it returns. A branch of the funereal yew hangs over its gunwale. It overshadowed a hero's grave, and something of his soul perhaps remains within it. Cut in two, fastened cross-wise, and ignited, it catches fire, and the flame soon shoots aloft. It will soon be reduced to ashes, but on the sacrificial stone first flows the warm blood of the victim. The "Cross of Fire" dies out, crackling hoarsely. Its blackened arms seem more funereal than before. Seized upon by the youngest warrior present, it runs—it flies over the moorland, over the gloomy peat-bog; it disappears—it reäppears on prominent points of the rugged path. It passes; and the heather grows alive—shadows wave to and fro, and rear themselves upright; these shadows are men, are warriors, erect, and fully armed. From hand to hand, from village to village, the Cross speeds onward, and all must follow it—the aged and the young.

Woe to him who should linger behind! No more labour in the field; no more merry nights in the hut; no more gatherings, no more festivals.

The husband wed in the morning will not wait until the evening. His is the honour of speeding further, of carrying the Fiery Cross. *She* knows that he may never return; she who, as yet, is but his betrothed. There is no hesitation, however, and, above all, no tears.

At the most, she will turn aside when the moment of departure comes, to escape the glances which are fixed upon her. But her burning eyes pierce to the very bottom of his heart. Others have undergone the same trial, have seen the one whom they loved depart, never more to return. And how many widows and mothers mourn for the sons who are no more! With these regrets mingles the stimulus of a bitter longing that their dead should be avenged. With their songs they regulate the march, with their clamour they excite it. And, at times, above the tumult of sounds rises a keen cry of agony, like the shrill whistle of the goshawk.

Night falls, and the Fiery Cross has completed its task. Gleams of light now pierce through the shadows. Unwonted fires blaze on the mountain-peaks, and intersect each other's rays. They are the beacons, which flame only in nights of peril. In the distance they summon the allied clans, which the morning will find reünited.*

* [It seems desirable to place before the reader the celebrated passage, from the "Lady of the Lake," in which Sir Walter Scott has described the progress of the "Fiery Cross":—

"'Twas all prepared;—and from the rock,
A goat, the patriarch of the flock,
Before the kindling pile was laid,
And pierced by Roderick's ready blade.
Patient the sickening victim eyed
The life-blood ebb in crimson tide,
Down his clogged beard and shaggy limb,
Till darkness glazed his eyeballs dim.
The grisly priest, with murmuring prayer,
A slender crosslet formed with care,
A cubit's length in measure due;
The shaft and limbs were rods of yew,
Whose parents in Inch-Cailliach wave
Their shadows o'er Clan Alpine's grave,
And, answering Lomond's breezes deep,
Soothe many a chieftain's endless sleep."

We pass over the anathemas which the priest launches against those who refused to carry on the Cross, or obey its summons.

"Then Roderick, with impatient look,
From Brian's hand the symbol took:
'Speed, Malise, speed!' he said, and gave
The crosslet to his henchman brave.
'The muster-place be Lanrick mead—
Instant the time—speed, Malise, speed!'
Like heath-bird, when the hawks pursue,
A barge across Loch Katrine flew;

A strange country is this, whose history so very closely resembles fable! Where the undulating robe of the daughters of Ossian mingles with the memories of the white veil of Mary Stuart. It floats still—that poetic veil, which France has so frequently chanted—in the pale mirror of LOCH LEVEN; to the south of the marshes of Kinross, it hovers above the gloomy moorlands. There, in an island, upon a block of granite, two heavy eyeless towers were her shadowy prison; without movement, without life. If a few seeds were borne thitherwards by the wind, there is no soil to receive them;* they would fall as barren as a deluded hope. Too guilty, undoubtedly; yet, did she merit such

High stood the henchman on the prow;
So rapidly the barge-men row,
The bubbles, where they launched the boat,
Were all unbroken and afloat,
Dancing in foam and ripple still,
When it had neared the mainland hill;
And from the silver beach's side
Still was the prow three fathom wide,
When lightly bounded to the land
The messenger of blood and brand."

Let us take one more striking picture; the agitation which arose in the country-side as the Fiery Cross was swiftly borne along:—

" Fast as the fatal symbol flies,
In arms the huts and hamlets rise;
From winding glen, from upland brown,
They poured each hardy tenant down.
Nor slacked the messenger his pace;
He showed the sign, he named the place,
And, pressing forward like the wind,
Left clamour and surprise behind.
The fisherman forsook the strand,
The swarthy smith took dirk and brand;
With changèd cheer, the mower blithe
Left in the half-cut swathe the scythe;
The herds without a keeper strayed,
The plough was in mid-furrow stayed,
The falc'ner tossed his hawk away,
The hunter left the stag at bay;
Prompt at the signal of alarms,
Each son of Alpine rushed to arms;
So swept the tumult and affray
Along the margin of Achray."

We must forbear from further quotation. Scott will be known to all our readers, but the illustration here drawn from "The Lady of the Lake" evidently furnished many of the details of Madame Michelet's not less spirited sketch.—*Translator.*]

* [This is not the case. The island is covered with trees and shrubs.—*Translator.*]

a fate,—this queen still in her youth, and at an age when anything seems pardonable?

Murray was her gaoler; a rival who, but for Mary, might perhaps have reigned. Borne away from Holyrood at midnight, and, though *enceinte*, forced to traverse the obscure moorlands and the dangerous marshes, she is imprisoned for a year in this castle, and held in custody by the enemy. She is brought to bed under the eye of Hate —a last misfortune—for it proved too much. Not a heart in Scotland could endure the shame.* The Douglases, successively charged with the duty of guarding her, are conquered. The youngest, a child, brings the sad story to an end. She speeds with him over the waters, speeds across the meadows; bold and hardy, she escapes, and hastens to the joy of battles. Whenever the dense fogs lighten, in the luminous mist you distinguish the flutter of the beautiful veil. It is Mary still!

Gloomier on the western shores, and in the neighbourhood of the sea, the waters, with their sudden gusts of anger, impress and terrify the spirit. In the "tumultuous" county of Argyll, in the solitary table-lands of Sutherlandshire, the loch, which, a moment ago, was so peaceful, and glassed so beautifully its outlines, suddenly undergoes the terrible shock of convulsed waves, hurtling against one another. Their emerald tints are succeeded by obscure shades, as if the black waters had risen from beneath. To see them, now agitating and now concealing themselves, you would say that some indefinable and unknown shadow was the cause of each convulsive bound. Woe to the barque taken by surprise! Attacked by unchained waves, which hungrily prey around it, which arise from the very depths, it gives way, and is capsized.

Must we accuse the sky? It does not always mingle its storms with the fury of the waters. More than one eye-witness has seen the monster which, growing weary of its dark hiding-place, rises to the

* [It is needless to inform the reader that Madame Michelet's historical memory is here at fault. Queen Mary was not *enceinte*, when imprisoned at Loch Leven; and had no child but James I., born in the previous year.—*Translator.*]

surface, and creates the tempest. Others have detected its mane floating on the winding rivers which it loves to frequent. Its size is not surprising; at least, it is not larger than the little shaggy Shetland pony which lives among the labyrinth of the northern isles, without

any dread of their terrible whirlpools. He is, in truth, the son of this gloomy Nature, of these grim solitudes.

Those which have been transported to the south have become intelligent and devoted servants. Without fear of dangers for themselves, they know what is dangerous for man, and proceed in front of him, to guide his steps.

Their sole dread is to find themselves suddenly alone, and abandoned. He who remains in the rear, then summons his companions by despairing cries, and apparently grows mad with terror.

The society of man makes him forget his own kind. He follows him everywhere, and is much disquieted if he retires out of sight. Nevertheless, he preserves always a mysterious isolation. His mood is variable, fantastic, capricious. He seeks caresses, and, at the same time, is gloomy, and fond of occasional solitude. He seems, under his mane, to revolve dark dreams, and to see into a world peculiar to himself. In the solitary counties of the extreme north of Scotland, close to

his own country, tormented, perhaps, by a desire to regain its dense fogs, he breaks loose every day, taking care to start when he is unobserved. Thus, for several hours he wanders, one knows not where. When he returns, it is with slow steps, as if he had been close at hand.

The creature supposed to lie concealed at the bottom of the lakes, the *kelpy*, remains wild, with accesses of sudden anger. Undoubtedly, the solitude irritates him, renders him wicked, gives him evil desires; for he seeks on every occasion to beguile and drown the fishermen and their offspring. On the shore of Loch Awe several children were at play. A charming kelpy suddenly presented himself, offered his back, and extended it so that all could mount. Then, with a sudden leap, he disappeared beneath the water.

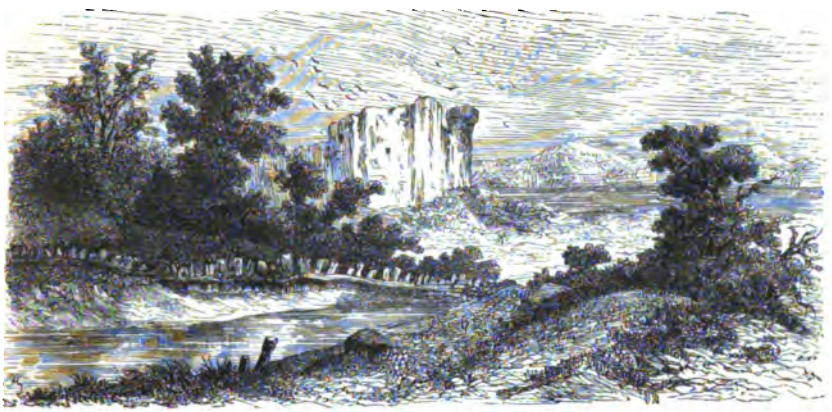
In winter, at least, you would suppose that under the ice he would fall asleep; you venture upon it; but lo! when half-way across, it opens with a crash, seizes you, and shuts you down for ever. Moreover, the very earth sometimes conceals him. A funeral procession was once on its way to a neighbouring graveyard. The water began to issue forth in floods, and all disappeared,—the living, and the corpse they were about to bury.

Such are the too real stories of a country whose surface is vexed by the troubled elements, and which, notwithstanding its solid granites, is not the less a region of uncertainty.

Beneath the moss of the peat-beds lies hidden the deep, deep water. From afar it plays upon the surface, and attracts, entices you. The cranberry, with its pretty cherry-coloured berries, relieves the melancholy landscape; the tiny andromeda animates it, and chimes on high its brilliantly red but tremulous bells. Do not yield to the temptation unless you know the narrow footway, on either side of which the meadow will prove to you a treacherous swamp. Vainly would you seek to escape. Under your violent efforts it would open a wider and still wider chasm, and you would sink down into its darkness.

Sombre as may be the remains of the old castles scattered over the islands, they are, nevertheless, reässuring. Built of stone and basalt,

the attacks of Time have found them indestructible. But who or what can resist the shock of revolutions? I love them thus, haughty, dismantled, solitary. The long dead herbage floating in the autumn wind seems the paled and discoloured banner of the clan.



The osprey has built its nest in the tower, and hovers anear, and watches. Its sharp, piercing, desolate cries are truly the voice of the desert. And the stone speaks, relating to me the history of those who, in feebly luminous nights, spread their shadow over the ruins.

No elegance is or was apparent; it is a feudal keep, built solely for defence. In the solidity of the thick walls a few openings were made for the silent watchman. Around it, the deep water. If it were connected with the shore by a causeway, the drawbridge was carefully raised every evening. For promenade, the narrow platform between the two towers; for horizon, the mists.

Men lived there but little. For even in their short intervals of peace they knew no repose; it was always movement, and forced marches across swamps, and bogs, beyond the mountains. A surprise might easily take place. Fatigue must be ignored; everybody on the alert, and nimble.

There were also pretended combats. From the castle might be heard the clank of weapons, the wild cries of encounters, the furious

shock of battalions. Sometimes the sinister noises smote against the walls; sometimes they died away in low hoarse murmurs.

But when a battle was waged in earnest, how sombre were the thoughts of her who remained behind. In the doubtful twilight of the keep, it was always the hour when visions sprang to life. Death wandered at two paces distant. Upon the gray walls the trembling fire projected its blood-red gleams. *She*, waiting, trembled. The

drawbridge was lowered in darkness; might she not see the sudden appearance, instead of the victorious spouse, of the stranger traitor!— All was terror.

To escape, to breathe, she mounted upon the platform. The wife of the great hunter suddenly felt herself a prey to singular temptations. With her silver whistle, slung to her waist, she whistled for her falconer; she took her falcon upon her hand, showed it an imperceptible

tible black point floating in space, and launched it. It was but too visible still, the bird which has only a soul, and carries it so high in the heaven that it seems unable to seek earth again. He fell at her feet, the melancholy bird of suffering, the noble heron. Mournful presage! All seemed to bewail it.—On the fatal marshes, the plover protracted his groaning voice, interrupted by a curious cry, full of fright. The lapwing replied by plaintive notes; above which rose the sharp ironical whistle of the curlew.

The doubtful season has come which will sink quickly into winter; the autumnal equinox is past. The white vapours have become gray mists. Every day they grow denser and darker. The spirit which watches over the destinies of each great Scottish clan appears no more. A doubtful shade comes and goes under the fogs. The Brownie of the marshes has replaced the White Lady. He strays about his mountain empire. The eve of All Saint's Day approaches; the irritable fairies awake, and every moment become more fantastic. Immediately, the whilom beneficent fairy will be changed into the horrible sorceress, who loves to sweep across the moorland, to dance the witches' sabbath on the snow, in the whirl of the hurricane. Day dies out in a tempestuous twilight. The night will be thronged with visions. It is better to leave the turret-platform, and bury one's-self within the massive walls of the castle, in its lowest story, where not a sound is audible.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SLEEPING WATERS.

FROM the trailing mists of Scotland, and from its vaguely-flowing waters, we now descend to the region of waters which *never* flow. Gray or glaucous, but inanimate, we say of them, "they sleep."

Sometimes, however, a thin barrier of sand scarcely separates them from the sea into which they are fain to empty themselves. Only a few efforts would be necessary to resume movement, and open a path across the shifting dune. The great rains of the equinox would come to their assistance.

But at this season of the rising of the waters, we see them, on the contrary, turning backward to reënter the inland countries. Without

any apparent sign of progress, they spread themselves, little by little, over the plain, and convert it into an ephemeral lake.

Everything which assists repose, assists death. The brooding water, with its opaline tint peculiar to the marsh, is no longer the salubrious water, the prolific generator of organic life. The sad landscape warns you from a distance. The low grounds, depressed, taken, abandoned, re-taken, betray by their pale vegetations the powerless efforts of a failing existence. Nothing recalls the fresh and wholesome verdure of the running waters. Nor does the air seem any longer alive. Damp, and loaded with languor, it weighs heavily. If a few gusts of the sea-wind arouse it in passing, it is with a hoarse sound of waves. We know well that it does not glide with light and changing vapours, which a breath dissipates. It strikes against a heavy obstacle which resists its course. The uniform veil extended over the gray waters cannot divide; and so, being crushed backward, it only carries still further its fixed and rigid pall.

In the burning Tropical climates, if the sun falls vertically all day upon stagnant waters, the veil thickens, and drags along funereally. In Asia, at the foot of the Himalayas, among the inundated jungles of the Téraï; in West Africa, on the coast of Zanzibar, and elsewhere upon the open marshes, the air assumes the morbid colours of the worst poisons,—dark-green, coppery-green, and ill-defined brown. There the sky loses its celestial blue; so profound under the Tropics, here so low and livid. Fair weather changes nothing. The dawn of a glorious day breaks uncertainly in a milky mist; and the sun, after it rises, passes, without colouring them, through these sickly and pallid tints.

Incessantly, everything which falls into the hot waters ferments in them, decomposes, and helps to renew their vapours.

The marsh is no longer the sole depository of these poisons, for the earth, too, is their keeper. The grave Circean filters them below, mingles them with her smallest atoms, broods over them, and, in fact, converts them into new compounds, which are more surely

fatal. Sometimes she lets them sink into a second and subterranean marsh.

When, after the rainy monsoon, returns the thirsty season which would drink up every drop of moisture, the area of the morass is contracted. The bare earth, smitten by the keen-edged heat, encloses in its slime its sleepy reptiles, its aspiring gases. Then it dries, and assumes the hardness of stone; but being unequally hardened, soon, in every direction, cleaves asunder. From the broad yawning crevasses issue hot humid airs and suffocating breaths. The poisonous malaria wanders low over the thorny jungle. The plants have not yet reassumed their verdure. No flower, no bird upon its wings, bears witness by its living colours to the triumph of life over death.

For creative purposes, the earth is here in want of shadows. It needs the semi-daylight of the Virgin Forest, where, under the dense foliage, and close beside the slumberous water, extends a region of humidity fully prepared for engendering life. From the fish, as they swim, leaps out life; but in tumult. Orders and kingdoms would fain confound themselves; they tell you that you are in a country of intoxication. Nature, in the indistinctness of her dreams, lets the flood of being flow unchecked, without recognizing her children.

The dwarf plants growing close to the soil, swollen with gases which make the flesh of animals, are no longer the prudent plants charged with purifying the atmosphere. Quitting their modest green attire, they are as richly embellished as flowers, and accustomed to live after their fashion; they disturb the air which they breathe.

The flowers have taken the forms of improbable insects. We fear to pick them. Suspended to the trees by their invisible network, might not one say that yonder pale and fantastic orchids are about to fly?—The birds and the insects, the great blue butterflies whose trembling wings skim the motionless waters, in their metallic splendour remind us of those fixed poisons which metals contain.

The better to relieve imperilled Nature, immense trees drink up the poisons through their roots, circulate them beneath their bark,

and on high, under the gleams of the sun, expand them in triumphant flowers.

Along the deadly course of the Orinoco and the Amazons, Shadow has been Safety. But in proportion as we ascend towards the chill icy regions, nothing is more pitiful than to encounter upon the greenish marshes, or the black peat-beds, the profound darkness of the firs. Farewell to the fairy land of Tropical vegetation. The fermented waters are transmuted into poisons. Acid or brackish, they gather round them a stiff and glaucous vegetation,—reeds, rushes, and the like. Above, predominates the tree of life; it braves the sharp breath of the swamp. At its feet a delicate little plant, which cannot drink there without dying, has contrived, by soldering together two of its leaves, to form a reservoir not unlike an amphora. At night, the dew descends and fills it. In sleep it shuts itself up, to open only in the day, and at the hour of work. From its small provision of pure water, it derives the refreshment it needs, and expands its flowers.

From the silent swamps of North America, where lie buried together the Indian, the bison, and the eland, if we go to the East, towards the marshes of the coast, we shall discover the same shadows. The conifers, whose sober life accustoms them to the worst conditions, go southward with the marshes. In the Carolinas, where the sea-wind whistles, the pine succeeds to the bog-cedar. In Louisiana the cypress dominates everywhere. But, more delicate (it loses every year its leaves), it lives in the fermented water only on the condition of raising its roots above it. We see them springing up all round, in imitation of small volcanic cones. Sometimes they rise to a height of fifteen feet; and by degrees, as they grow old, others arise, which ensure to the cypress its requisite elevation.

The healthy peat-beds of the Northern marshes have gradually disappeared. Danger revives. The frothy floating mosses, the sinuous furrow of the rattlesnake, the hoarse sounds and harsh growlings which issue from the reeds, warn you to be on your guard.

If, in the track of the patient American naturalist Audubon, you penetrate into one of those sombre and tortuous *bayous* which environ the eternally desolated glades of the Floridas, the savour of the poisoned miasmas seizes your palate. Bending low over the troubled waters, the reeds interlace among each other. And, above them, the maple-tree, with its dense shade; the suffering cypress, with long, motionless, funereal lichens,—compress the air, and prevent it from circulating freely. The moment you enter into it you are suffocated. But if the higher life succumbs or retires, the unclean reptiles, the caymans, the stupified alligators, which fix upon you their blood-shot eye, everywhere multiply and prosper. In these warm sulphurous waters they feel themselves at home. If some power was not upon guard, they would fill the marsh.

Happily, there is one who watches,—"the bird of the long legs, who walks so softly that none can hear him." The blue heron, in his dark plumage, is well fitted for the gloom of the swamp. His fine golden eyes, more piercing than a falcon's, can see clearly in the shadow. And yet, he never hunts; he waits, full of resignation, of patience, apparently made of stone. Solitary nearly all the year, in the brief moment which unites him to his mate, they work together, and eagerly feed their young. If the moon lets fall a few rays upon the marsh, they fish even by night. In this morbid air, which their children must also breathe, they, motionless upon their nest, can be supported only by abundant food. Despite the severe labour of the parents, they are seated in a suffering attitude, lean, and already sickly, waiting, and calling. If the parents delay, they can hold their place no longer, but fall backward on their long feeble limbs, crying beside the waters which preserve for them their prey.

However, the fishing of the heron creates but laughter in the morass. A more active keeper is needed to stir its populace into fury. The

white ibis is here the great purifier. He does not eat in the proportion in which he kills. He satisfies his appetite in the first place, and then, that the task of destruction may be more easily accomplished,

he seeks for companions. He knows very well that at certain hours the frog returns to its marsh, while the crocodile sleeps, and the reptiles rise from the slime to breathe. "In the grim semi-daylight something shines. It is the white bird, which stalks to and fro like a spectre. His mandibles snap; he is at work. The stroke of his feet strikes the water like a knell. Following the sinuosities of the morass, he penetrates to the very bottom of its muddy sediment in complete obscurity." Fifteen minutes have scarcely passed before all is over. Hundreds of frogs, of young alligators, of serpents, float dead upon

the surface. Then begins the feast,—too rapidly eaten, perhaps, and certainly indigestible!

Quitting the shadows, we see the ibises arranging themselves in a row, with their breasts turned towards the sun. At the end of an hour, already lightened, they rise into the living air, and give themselves up to rapid evolutions for an hour or two; then redescend, and resume their task.

But even this is insufficient. We are near the sea, near the warm vapours of the Gulf Stream. The coast, with its mangoes, which, fearing to sink, lie exposed in the open air, with the refuse of plants and the shell-fish stranded among their roots by day, can no longer with its breezes purify the morass. The earth here is but a cemetery. The dead of the ocean come to bury the living of the shore. The poor captive mollusc feels its shell gradually closing beneath the weight to become its tomb. Everything ferments, and is purified under the tide, which beats upon and softens the ill-fated shore.

But what is the result if the sea and the marsh communicate; if, through the ebbing and flowing tide, they incessantly mingle their waters? A sombre marriage! At this encounter of fresh waters and salt waters a whole world of plants and animals on either side expires. The warmer grows the season, the greater is the harvest gathered in by Death. With the month of flowers awakens the slumbering malaria. Slowly it extends its rule over the interior, and gains the lowlands of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Woe to the white man who thinks he may be able to brave it! He must abandon everything, and fly without looking behind. Above all, no pausing by night, no sleep. It is the hour when the yellow fever entraps its victims. Under the fire of its poison, as if stricken by lightning, he would be disorganized, overcome, and would return to the elements.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TREMBLING PRAIRIES.

THE earth incessantly labours, and seeks to extend its sway over those undefined waters, which, having been unable to follow the course of the rivers, have lingered behind, isolated in various hollows. The firm soil which supports us and gives us security, very often rests upon one of those sheets of water which have been gradually covered over. On the coast of Dieppe, for example, we count three formations superimposed upon, and alternated with, as many strata of earth.

By what miracle were these successive formations created? By that which took place in the early ages of the world, when everything was born of the water and the air combined.

The plant then assisted Nature. Not through the moss of the peat-beds; still less through the lentil which floats upon the slumbering waters. These latter, daughters of a well-organized world, were not yet born. It is the infinitely little which have always accomplished the greatest tasks.

I do not know whether you have contemplated through the microscope, or in engravings, those graceful apparitions of the fresh water which are called the *confervæ?* Upon the little pools which the

rains of spring have left behind, short as will be their duration, you will see superficially floating another and a denser, though quite as clear, water.

After a certain time this water assumes a light green tint,—so light that it is scarcely discernible. If you touch it, it ceases to be; all has vanished. But put a drop of this water under a magnifying-glass, and it becomes a charming revelation! You see an intertanglement of crystal roots separated at intervals by knots, like reeds. Between each interval some green grains remain immovable. It is through these green grains that the conferva tells you what it is,—a plant already. It has no roots with which to cling to the earth. It has no leaves for respiration, no flowers to assure its future. It is unable to rise above the water. Being only water still, in the air it would evaporate in a moment. But through its green seeds it decomposes the light, and feeds upon it as well as the oak. Through them, too, it can love. On a warm or somewhat stormy day, you will see the partition give way which separates in reality two different beings. Timid and slow, on each side pass the little green seeds. They dart in front of one another. They touch—they are no more—but the conferva is henceforth sure of never dying.

No more is asked by Nature that, in due time, the delicate net-work may mount above the waters; the delicate, almost invisible net-work, which, at a later date, shall become a vaporous, floating island, gliding beneath the breeze, and flinging hither and thither its light shadows. But one day the wind will propel it to the shore, and it will remain there, wrecked. The island will become the "trembling prairie," strong enough to support a bird. Leave all to time. Those who see in the future what it may also be *our* lot to see, shall rest upon it as firmly, shall think themselves seated on a rock.

This is no long-past creation, no creation of a bygone age, but one which is as active to-day as it was of old, and lies close beside us.

Hol-land, the "hollow land," is partly formed, as its name indicates, by floating meadows. They have created the land in all parts,

except where the rivers did not bring their slime, the sea its dunes of sand. Beneath the mist of the shallow tranquil lakes of Over-Yssel, the peat-field would willingly plant itself; but the moss which, in the broad cellules of its fronds, can retain a whole lake, does not veil the waters, but only holds them suspended. The Earth would fain do more, would create a second Earth above the waters, and it has attained this end.

In summer heats, much more protracted than those of the great North, one has time to recognize the progress of the work. The reeds and the water-lilies will decay upon the marshes, will flower, and ripen their seeds. And, later still, when the floating soil has acquired some density, we shall see the willows springing.

Numerous islets thus created float afterwards in concert upon the same lake, until the wind unites them, and converts them into one large island. Its extent makes it already a domain. Happy the owner, who, from his bank, shall see it come in his direction. The law will make him its sole possessor. But let him take care. Let him attach his conquest solidly to the mainland. For if a contrary wind should loosen it, and drive it to the opposite bank, all would be lost for him without return. And then, what would avail the labour and the incessant action which have planted the leafy trees, heavy with mist and shadow, and built up the picturesque mill, whose wheel for ever awakens the ear with its assiduous plash!

Man, we see, then, is an assistant. He arranges everything for the birth of these isles, which, once consolidated and solidified, will convert the trembling prairie into an excellent pasturage.

The inhabitant of the region of the *tourbières* turns them to his own profit. He imitates the process of Nature. If he desires to change his peaty pool into a meadow, he goes forth upon the lakes, and purchases a floating island. He mounts upon it, and along the canal directs it as a pilot steers his barge, by thrusting a long pole into the muddy bottom. Reaching his home, he runs it aground at the place which he has chosen.

A curious thing is this grand labour of a world in formation,

accomplished in an apparent sleep. Water, on a level with the earth, which does not progress, which does not speak, which the mists

half veil, gives to the voyager no idea of an active creation. The animals, too, are all dreamers. The cows rest their heads on the dyke, the horses on the shoulder of their comrade; the sea-birds of the shore, elsewhere so noisy, do not seem completely awakened; on the sleepy canals the water-lilies are in no hurry to open. It seems, indeed, as if they were always nodding.

The scene is very differently animated in Louisiana, where we have beheld the Mississippi and its children working on a majestic scale in the creation of the trembling prairies. In this rich America, where Nature is everywhere superabundant, she has not found it necessary to employ the slow process of Holland. The primeval forest, traversed by the river, furnished her with materials of another kind, and infinitely more solid. Trees floated towards the island in immense rafts. Along the route the mud expanded over the surface; vegetation throve. Thus beautiful floating gardens arose and flourished, until their weight entailed their shipwreck. Other and lighter isles,

following in their track, underwent the same fate. They filled up the bottom in successive strata. But when the rafts were united together over a wide area, they then had power in themselves to keep afloat, sinking or rising according to the level of the stream. They were the creators of the earlier shores of the Mississippi at its delta. All Lower Louisiana was at first but a trembling prairie. We feel it still moving and shaking under the railway that traverses it, and which it was found requisite to build upon piles.

But when the forest no longer furnished to the Mississippi one tree out of a thousand, the river should have ceased counting upon its alluvial drifts to continue its prairies. And all its children also, rivers and bayous, had no longer any material with which to build up the *terra firma* but their mud. The shallow lakes, overshadowed by the cypresses, were on the point of falling asleep. To keep them awake, the great river returned to the air-bubble of the Holland marshes. But, thanks to the impetus of the vegetation, the work of the prairie was able to progress rapidly. The Mississippi, which has no rival in the world for the healthfulness of its waters, has never witnessed the malaria stealing along its shores.

While, towards the coast, the colonists of Georgia and the Floridas have every summer been compelled to fly before it, the inhabitants of Louisiana remain peacefully in their habitations, and gather in their crops of rice, maize, and sugar-canes. In the autumn the scene changes, but is still full of life. The sugar-mills, whose hundreds of tall springing shafts vomit smoke and flame, say to the passing steamer, that the Summer has been good, that the Mississippi and her children have laboured well.

## CHAPTER VI.

### WHY THE SWAN SINGS NO MORE.

UPON all these shallow, healthy waters of which I have been speaking, tens of thousands of birds love to swoop. Those which feed on the herbage in the recesses of the morass would fly the stagnant waters where the blue heron and the white ibis have established their kingdom.

Louisiana, Holland, Scotland, were the paradise of that great family of shore-birds, which, never diving, halt preferentially by the low waters of the marshes or the decreasing lakes. They are unwilling to quit them, like the swallow. They remember them in absence, and return every year to the same locality.

Ancient history shows us the Swan distributed throughout the world: Greece, Italy, all Europe. But it was not the Swan of the North, as is now the case.

She lived in every temperate climate. In England, upon the Thames alone, four thousand were nourished. Paris had its Isle of Swans. They brightened the Seine with their snowy fleets.

Why are they exiled entirely from so many places? Nature does

not change in great aggregates. She proceeds, as we have seen, by partial revolutions—slow and imperceptible revolutions—which afford men time to look about them, to recede or advance gradually, without shock or collision.

The Swan apparently does not seem to have suffered. She has preserved her poetry, her gracefulness, her nobleness of movement, her purity of colour, her beauty of strength. By her side, on the contrary, the poor heron, in his impoverished condition, rails against the vicissitudes of the weather, the miseries, the fastings he has had to undergo. In the few marshes where he fishes still, his attitude and his meagreness betray his decadence. He is truly a king deposed. And yet, nothing rankles in his heart: we see that no bitterness mingles with his melancholy. Let us fancy him resigned to be buried along with a dying world.

The bird of Leda, in her passionate irritation, appears the true exile; but banished by Man, and not by Nature. All antiquity alludes to her choleric humour. It seems as if a longing for battle inspired her heart. She will, and will not; approaches, and will not approach. By her low, harsh screams she betrays her anxieties and her contradictions. Upon land she is the spirit of agitation. It is only in quitting this world that she finds harmony, her supreme harmony in death.

But, beyond this even, she has been unable to appease her soul. She broods upon the blue waters of Greece in her virginal whiteness, so sweet to the eye, and yet is still the terrible Virgin, the too pure and too austere Nemesis. She lives, armed with the avenging justice. Who will bestow upon her that moment of divine tenderness, which surprises the heart, and holds the sword suspended?

Gloomy and inconsolable, she expends herself. One alone knows the fact, a benevolent deity—Jupiter.

Nemesis sees a swan pursued by an eagle. She does not wait. Full of pity, she clasps the wounded one to her bosom. But for this single gleam of gentleness, in an eternity of hatred, immediately

she grows wroth, and resumes her old evil nature. She will *not* have loved!

The Tartar fable, in the sharpness and violent contradictions of the wind-swept table-land, has also made the Swan the image of passion, of vexing contrasts, of sombre dualism. Her beauty upon earth serves as a symbol. The most adored women remind us of her. They have her grace, her whiteness, her movement: "swan-necked," "swan-like plumage," "wing of a swan." When dead, she is the sacred bird, to which the Tartar sacrifices whatever he deems most precious,—the horse, which, stronger than the whirlwind, carries him away to the desert. Who would dare to refuse? She is not dead, that bird which is no more. She is now the spotless virgin. She judges those who pass into the further world. Forty of them are seated at the gate of hell in their virginal whiteness. Woe to him who has offended them!

But let us leave the fable. Let us see the Swan in her truth, in her variety of freedom. We have around us none but those which are more or less tamed, and irritated. The domestic Swan in no wise resembles the bird of the wilderness, which Audubon, and John Sinclair, and others, have witnessed.

On the lakes of the Ohio and the Mississippi, on the solitary lochs of Scotland, they are found in societies of two to three hundred. They set out together in the morning, return together in the evening. They make the air echo with sounds of clarion and trumpet, to warn and rally the scattered families, so that all may be reünited at the hour of twilight.

The two naturalists agree in saying that in this absolute *tête à tête* with Nature nothing choleric nor discordant occurs. They have but one weakness,—that of being charmed with their own beauty, and of paying too much heed to their toilette. In the evening, when they meet together,—in the morning, when they awake,—instead of contentions and squabbling, you see them occupied with this important care, and apparently never satisfied. With beautiful undulations of their neck, of the profile of their beak dentelated like a

comb, they smooth down their plumage, they fling the water behind them, they sleek and lay down their feathers one by one. They open also their wings, with a hoarse, loud clapping. If the weather appear propitious for a long journey, they make ready; all of them together, they beat the ice with their broad oars. Underneath you hear a kind of hushed rolling of a drum—as of a drum veiled with crape. They are ready,—they mount, and are away. The air is stirred as if with the clash of waves; but above all rises their clear and penetrating voice.

Though the mists and the snows, which disturb the electric currents, prevent them from recognizing one another, and compel them to descend, no observer has ever seen them set out at spring for their great voyage. It is wholly a mystery. We know not the regions they inhabit in summer, nor their extent.

Only we see them faithfully returning, when the winter approaches, to their beloved lakes, sheltered in the reedy forest.

They return not alone, as we have said, but in a society. In Scotland, John Sinclair saw them on the morning after their arrival separating into families of six,—father, mother, and children.

In spite of the jealous nature of the Swan, he keeps his sons beside him for at least two seasons. But when they reach their adult age, at three years, he looks upon them as his rivals.

Training them to swim and fly is not difficult. His hollow bones give lightness to a bird that seems heavy. But these bones, through their very lightness, are fragile. However, in his winter voyages, athwart the tempest, it is not enough to fly well. The bird must know how to guide her course, how to face the winds, or, better still, elude them. The feeble elongated neck, which the Swan extends in flight, cannot long go *against* the gale; and, on the other hand, a diagonal wind, striking one wing, and compressing it, wearies its elasticity, and has many dangers.

What would become of the little ones, alone, and without experience, on their first voyage? Not even the father, if he be young, can guide them. An aged chief is necessary; one renowned for his

knowledge of the routes, and of their dangers. All the families of the flying world submit to his directions.

Has a bird so busy as the Swan time to give himself up to an angry, quarrelsome temper? Perhaps, you will say, he has too much to do. This is the cause of his agitation. But the Swan of which Virgil has sung, he laboured also, and yet was no vexed, no quarrelsome Swan. He was a melancholy bird. In his Mantuan marshes the air, it is true, is very heavy, and the Swan loses his screams of rage; they are simply tender modulations.

"De son long cou
Ondulent des sons harmonieux."

From his long neck
Do sweetly undulate harmonious sounds.

He does not doze upon the sleepy waters. Every moment he springs forward; "whether, to bear on high, in a sublime strain, the name of Varus, the saviour of Mantua; whether, faithful and inconsolable, he quits the earth, and follows with his voice the star in the celestial way."

He whose penetrating eye saw so clearly into the secrets of Nature, whose subtle ear heard everything, was not deceived. The Swan's song is not a fiction. What is most astonishing is that he sings no more. No other bird has the vocal organs so fully developed. The trachea, simple and direct even in the nightingale, the first of minstrels, in the Swan makes a double circumvolution. The neck has twenty-three vertebræ; the breast, rounded like the beautiful bow of a ship, is a positive reservoir of air. This air cannot escape all at once. It must undulate through its prolonged circuit. If rendered supple, it should utter sweet and drawn-out notes.

If the Swan has not the true song, he has its modulations. The disagreeable voice, for which he is so generally censured, is a head-voice. Even this, though harsh, is very varied. His most frequent tone, which betrays emotion, is like the low neighing of a prancing

horse. He has also the somewhat impatient murmur of the dog who seeks something from his master. In his wrath he hisses like a cat. When left to himself it is a *krun, krun,* which compels the repetition of the same word. But if he feel himself suddenly wounded, a cry from his very heart escapes him, keen, and full of accent.

The indifferent passer-by will not have heard these varied voices. You must have lived with swans, and gained their confidence.

I have had that good fortune, and, quite recently, have spent a summer with them on the shore of the little lake of Pierrefonds.

There they were eight in number, and of very different moods. The females, calm, beautiful, imposing; the young, timid and silent. Only he, the father, seemed to have gained, with time, experience and a certain audacity. He was so haughty, so nobly beautiful, that I named him *Jupiter.*

We all of us threw him bread; he took it like a king; and immediately withdrew. To gain a better knowledge of him, much perseverance was needed. At first I saw from my windows their beautiful fleet sail away. In the morning, I surprised them as they awoke. It was in August; but in that year, overshadowed with so much sorrow (1870), the mists rose early. On the opaque lake, which reflected everything like a mirror, the swans floated clearly defined in their virgin whiteness;—noble always, with movements slow and gentle—scarce half awake! Just as if it were in reverent feeling of the still, still hour.

But, the sun rising, they grew more alert. They lashed the water with their oars; they did not sink, but glided onward with the waves. —Their wings were close-shut, for they open them only under the influence of emotion. Their feathers then divide into two spans, and form beautiful quivering arches of alabaster.

In stormy weather, when athwart the clouds the sun darts sharpened rays, they abandon themselves on the water to a hundred different pastimes. The waltz, like that of a cat endeavouring to catch her own tail; the aquatic march, with wing extended, like a shimmering veil, or beating the air with redoubled blows. Some-

times they sail swiftly, as in a race; sometimes, with broad oar-like feet, and thick resistant tail, they stand marvellously erect in the waters.

One would think that in their freedom they would accomplish extensive voyages, or at least expend in motion their electricity, and dart through the waves like a meteor.

In the warm, luminous, and golden days, they enjoy delightful intervals of indolence, and love to float as the tide wills, separating a little from one another. For this sweet *far niente*, one oar is sufficient; the other reposes underneath. It is balancing, rather than swimming. They incline a little on one side, and the wind impels them at its pleasure.

When, in the evening calm, the water becomes a level sheet of glass, below, a little in the shadow, the white form detaches itself, and repeats its graceful movements.* All the undulations of his neck are repeated in those of the other swan which swims underneath, and thence looks up at him. They near one another, and every moment bend their head as if in amorous mood. They draw closer, they almost touch—but the water is disturbed! The fugitive image is no more! No one will ever have seen that solitary kiss.

A stranger scene was my stormy relations with Jupiter. He knew that he was the favourite. At a distance he recognized me, and swam towards me, with an impetuous movement he seemed unable to repress. He approached, his wings wide open, his neck extended with the neigh of a choleric impatience. If I brought him nothing, or if I deceived him, his beautiful neck assumed the inflections of a reptile. Thrown back, at first, over his shoulders; then curved in advance, with his head and glance on one side, in a haughty, indignant attitude, he hastened away, with an indescribable something of hatred, blended with gloomy passion, like the hatred of love.

* ["The swan, on sweet St. Mary's lake,
Floats double, swan and shadow."]

But I avoided a renewal of these storms; for in them there was one thing which moved me most particularly; namely, that when he had regained the water, he would turn himself around, come again to the bank, and lean his breast upon it. And then he gave utterance to a wail, a broken sigh, a low sob, which seemed to me a reproach.

I much preferred to see him approaching tranquilly, although he was always a little excited, followed by his beautiful family. At the end of our sojourn at Pierrefonds, we could hardly induce them to quit us. They distinguished me from the other side of the lake, and rushed across. I distributed to them my largesses, seated upon the grass. Soon they too, Jupiter setting the example, gradually gathered round me in a beautiful and noble circle.

Behold the free alliance which is pleasing to the Swan, which softens his wounds, and lulls asleep his regret for the pleasures which have ravished his beauty. He was not born to be the slave of the aged and capricious child who calls himself Man; but he sought no more to avoid him.

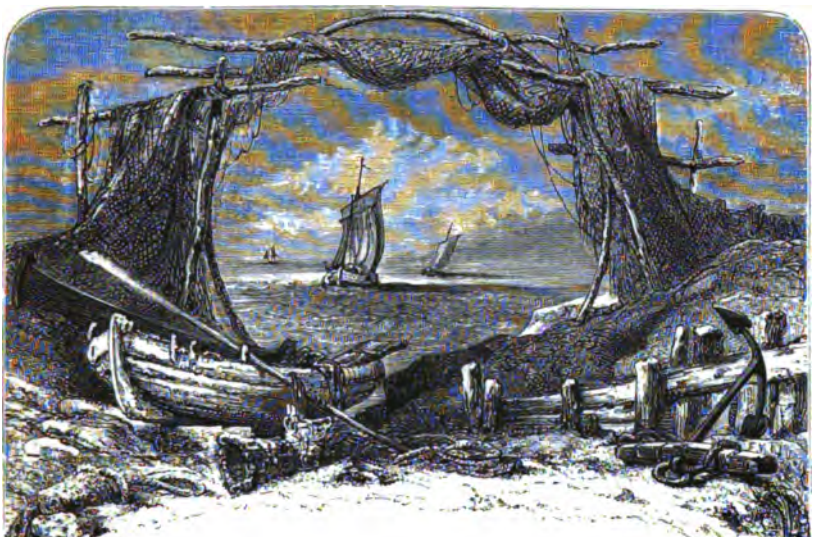
If, when free, he is pursued by the hunter and attacked, he does not the less return, should he survive, in the following year, to the same locality, without appearing any wilder in temperament. There must be fresh persecutions before he finally tears himself away from his cherished lake. When mortally wounded, while the other swans are screaming and fluttering below stream, he, mute, expanding his great wings, mounts as high as he can, as if he would regain the heavens.

John Sinclair, who relates the bird's pathetic end, speaks also of the astonishment of the swans, and their melancholy, when, on arriving in Scotland, towards the 20th of October, those accustomed to visit his native country found quite another land. Everything had changed. Oats had ripened on the surface of the dried-up lakes. They had arrived in an exquisitely wild harmony, uncoiling themselves in a long undulating line, and all ringing out their clarion note together.

Without descending, they perceived that it was no longer *their* country, their home. For a moment they hesitated; then, abruptly made their decision. They plunged together into the mists of the North, and disappeared.

Nor have they been seen again.

THE SEA



## CHAPTER I.

### THE FIRES AND THE WATERS—THE SEAS OF FIRE.

SEATED on this Tuscan coast,—formerly so tumultuous but now so peaceful,—and opposite the sapphire sea, I seek to encourage and reässure myself. My country, the whole world, in this night of blood, seem as if they would crumble into annihilation. Life, however, is persistent, and always recommences, defying death, and springing up anew. Upon the accumulated ruins, will she not again stand erect in her unconquerable youth?

I desire to get established and strengthened in this past, and to interrogate it; to ask of these regions formerly so terrible the memory of their revolutions, their protracted wars—wars bitter and desperate as the forces in convulsion,—Water and Fire,—which at one time engaged in combat here, as, in truth, over the whole world. Did it not appear as if these two elements, in

their violent antagonism, would alternately destroy the worlds which sprang into existence?

But are Water and Fire, then, such hostile elements? No. I see them everywhere in close proximity, intelligently working for the harmony of the whole universe. In whatever direction I gaze, I find side by side the mighty fires and the mighty waters.

It was ever from the bosom of the sea that the first fires issued. Assisted by the vapour which multiplied their power, they propelled from the nucleus of the earth the matter which at first developed itself only into islands, sometimes arranged in annular forms, sometimes extended in long serpentine undulations. This figure, the most elegant which the continents have assumed, seems at the same time the most living. When it organizes itself from south to north, and elevates the axis of its mountains in the direction of the magnetic orientation, nothing then disturbs the progress of the mysterious fluid. Unimpeded, it passes from one pole to another, and sweeps over the earth, like a current of the most intense, the most complete, and the most regular life.

Such appears to us the noble American continent. Under the impulse of its manifold furnaces, it traverses the globe, and, with the assistance of the two oceans which border it, and swell its gases, and make them of strength sufficient to raise the Cordilleras, upheaves that Titanic amphitheatre, four thousand miles in length.

A similar example is afforded us by Italy. She starts from Etna, in Sicily, where she steadies herself on her light panther's foot in order to spring towards the Alps.

I have named the panther. Italy, in truth, has the very profile of that beautiful animal:—its nervous loins,—its flanks slender at first, and amorously compressed by the blue waters of the Gulf of Naples,—then, enlarging with a maternal sweep, to conceive Etruria and Rome, the very life of Italy. It becomes strong, and it remains graceful. With its flexible and undulating spine, one feels that it

could distend itself at will. Its head disappears, in order that it may assume a crown of glaciers.

Such a bound, such a leap, could not be accomplished without a burning jet of life, which is everywhere perceptible, even in our own days. As, for instance, in Vesuvius, which as suddenly bursts into light or recedes into darkness as the intermittent fires of a lighthouse. Or in the Solfataras, and the boiling waters. The Roman Campagna has no volcano, but it pours out its thermal springs in torrents. Behind, in the Romagna, the frequently trembling soil betrays its subterranean relations with the Archipelago of Greece, and the fires of Santorin. In Tuscany, in the district of Volterra, are districts as rugged and bristling as those discovered in the moon; they are the ruins torn up by the last throbs and palpitations of the volcanoes. Many of the extinct craters have become tiny lakes, where the sleeping water presents you with an image of peace.

But we do not the less perceive in every direction the efforts of the waters and the fires, and their immense apparitions. What infernal phantom, what Larva of Tartarus, appeared to rise, when, opposite Etruria, Elba, that black ferruginous mass, arose from their combats, to terrify and yet enrich the country!

What an alarming vision, when the white Carrara leaped forth from the incandescent fires, and seated itself upon the shore!

If these fires in certain localities seem nowadays completely subdued, from beneath we feel their heat ascending to us. In the upper valleys which are connected with the Apennines, not far distant from the sleepy landscapes of the Maremma, and upon hills whose desolate slopes are strewn with ruin, groups of vaporous jets, or *soffioni*, may be seen, whose waters remind you of the Icelandic *geysers*, together with their intermittent, and, as it were, gasping respiration. So warm are these vapours and these waters, that wherever they circulate in their subterranean march, the soil burns and trembles. You need a guide to prevent you from sinking. At times the earth thunders as if under your feet some one was knocking, and seeking to obtain an egress. The vapours wandering in the gloom may justly be compared to restless spirits. They have broken out of their prison,

and risen to the surface with a loud hiss. But again they bury themselves, and move to and fro on their burning bed as if in search of some new locality. At one time you would think them appeased and slumbering; but before long the earth once more trembles with their harsh utterances, their profound sighs!

Around the lakelets (*lagoni*) made by their falling jets not a blade of grass springs up,—all is waste. Trees and herbs have exiled themselves voluntarily, flying from the burning soil, and the saline incrustations which cover it. As for Earth itself, calcined, convulsed, and in many places hollow, it presents the very image of torture. It was in this region that Dante gathered his ideas of the *Inferno*.

From the tumult of these vapours and these waters, Nature has drawn great treasures. She pours them out upon the world. And it is due to these that the arts and the higher industries have made so unexpected a progress.

Thus, upon this now pacified coast, we see the two elements ever in contention; but, be it said, for the advantage of humanity.

In the interior of the earth, and afar from the sea—in China, for example—we may again behold the action of fire all around us; on the mountains and in the plains, and on the very surface of the soil. But it terrifies no one. On the contrary, it is a good servant, whom man summons or dismisses at his bidding.

In the evening, it illuminates the public places; in winter, it provides the poor with light and warmth. It may be kindled or put out at will. You need only place a stone over the opening from which the fire escapes, and it will always come to your assistance. This is the sole precaution necessary out of doors; but if a person wishes it brought into his house, he pens it up in the hollow stem of a bamboo. A docile assistant; it asks only to serve you, and become, as it were, a slave of human life.

But, on the other hand, where are the waters? Hidden everywhere; in lakes, in subterranean seas, in rivers.—(*Humboldt.*) Lift your eyes towards the mountain-ridge where the volcanoes smoke and

flame, and the snows and ice, heated by their hot breath, thaw, and pour forth their waters.

If we descend from Eastern China, in a south-westerly direction, towards the grand depths of the Caspian, we find the fires again teeming underneath the surface of the ground, and spreading over the lakes in immense floods of naphtha, always ready to kindle; but our impression is different.

Fire, which in Persia was the ancient lord of the country, which appeared to it armed with a divine, mysterious power, cannot be, at the same time, the familiar which the Chinese carries about with him as a friend. Around that imprisoned sea, in its time of decay, everything concurred to concentrate the inflammable force of the dreaded liquid. The Caspian has lost its affluents. The Oxus has turned aside from its basin, and conveys its waters into the Sea of Aral. And other channels have also arrested their progress in the former direction.—(*Vambery.*)

While the Caspian is gradually disappearing through evaporation, a bituminous sea is accumulating as if for the purpose of replacing it. Already it has forced its way to the light through the briny waters; it rises to the surface, and there it remains suspended, seething and boiling, and awaiting only some accident to set it on fire. And when this shall take place, the Caspian will become a ruddy sheet of lava, veiled with gloomy and funereal reflections.

For days, and weeks, and months, it burns. It can be extinguished only by a furious wind, which rarely rises in the hollow of this depressed basin.

On land, men fear to approach the naphtha, lest they should kindle it by any mishap, for nothing could quench or crush out the flame. For upwards of a century an immense area, which now appears as if it would burn for ever, has been in an incandescent state.

And with reference to the convulsions which destroy the cities terraced upon the flanks of the Caucasus, are they not due to this element when it breaks out into action, and seeks to effect a passage through the mountain-mass?

To appease it, man must always keep its altar duly tended. And from far away India, from Delhi, the Parsees have come to maintain the sacred fire. At twenty-three versts from the Persian town of Osakow, which is wholly built upon a sea of naphtha, in the centre of a vast plain, where flames escape in all directions, the Parsees have raised their temple. It is encircled with a crenelated wall. From each pinnacle leaps a lurid tongue. On high, the blazing cupola forms a triumphant crown. Within the temple, a myriad tiny jets escape from the soil; and upon the altar the fire shoots and blazes with an eternal life.

But in those depths, which are ever growing deeper, as if they would fain inter a world, this fire, violent as it may be, does not give the idea of an active force. One would rather say it was a focus of reäction, a subterranean overflow of the great table-lands of Siberia and Tartary, which are slowly rising. Around all this basin there is nothing which offers the promise of youthful life. The waters are absent; they lie far away in the distance. The thirsty earth is yearning for them; the Tartar and the Kirghiz hasten in search of them. Yonder lives that acrid, burning life which still stimulates the warm and bilious blood of the horse, the favourite nourishment of the nomad. The sour milk of the mare, with tea added to it, does not quench their thirst. Water is here the perpetual mirage; and all die, men and beasts, if they cannot reach it.

Whither speed those horsemen, and women and children, and herds, across the steppe, whom we never find again in the same locality? They are in pursuit of that which incessantly conceals itself from them. They never halt. Their children have no cradle. On the day of their birth placed in the saddle, in the saddle they remain both day and night. And thenceforth nothing arrests their wandering existence—an existence without memories—a career seething and whirling in the sands of the desert.

On the contrary, my Tuscany, where I am now residing, settled down strong and solid, and wrote her annals in durable eternal

characters on a stormy earth. Etruria, growing reässured and tranquil above her fertile ruins, watched and meditated. The danger was everywhere. Behind her, in Lombard Italy, through the sudden floods of the great rivers. She attempted to calculate their peril. Before her, within her own borders, and to the south, lay volcanic Italy, and the internal play and mysterious perturbation of the subterranean action.

But on the site which men had supposed to be so unstable, and so utterly under the domination of blind unconscious forces, she discovered the existence of an harmonious work; of certain periodical crises, which might occasionally retard, but would also assist her progress. She foresaw that these convulsive phenomena would slacken; detected the immutable law of the slow metamorphoses which alone prolong life and render possible its progress. Upon the ruins, vine-clad Etruria erected her cities, and in her own greatness prepared the greatness of the Italy to come.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CHARM OF THE DUNES—THE MELANCHOLY OF THE LANDES.

THOSE fires which we have seen kindled everywhere, those waters turned to vapour by their burning contact, have conquered the resistance of inert matter, have elevated it to prodigious heights, even, as in the Himalaya, above the respirable atmosphere.

And such great combined forces were necessary to build up the mountains, which, when the whole of the mainland was for ever separated from the sea, poured forth upon it a revivifying power in the torrents, and streams, and rivers issuing from their glaciers. But these waters did not descend alone. Loaded with the incessant *débris* of the declivities, they came, in their turn, to act upon the sea-shore. Following the fire, they completed the work of the alluvium. Not far from the granitic cliffs, which were thought immutable, extends the muddy strand, which shall in due time become the level fertile plain.

Elsewhere, we meet only with the sands, which, it appears, elongate at their pleasure their smooth and unbroken surface or in their shifting dunes accumulate, intersected by beautiful gulfs, and safe and charming bays.

Nothing like this is to be found in Italy. Let it be permitted me, at least in remembrance, to take my seat for a moment, and breathe

the salubrious air of our Southern terraces. Under the light shade of their slender colonnades, how often have I watched the genial encounter of the great river and the sea, and the sand, blown by the wind, transform in a few hours the outline of the shore, ribbing it and undulating it like another ocean.

I might also, it is true, have descended with the Rhone, which in similar fashion elevates its sand-hills in face of the Mediterranean; but, under the influence of the violent mistral, they roll in whirlwinds —the scene is a moving desert. I should be blinded; I could see nothing.

And the North is very gloomy. The old Rhine, loaded and overloaded with its burden of mud, saddens, beneath the dull gray sky, the sea of Holland with an excess of gloom.

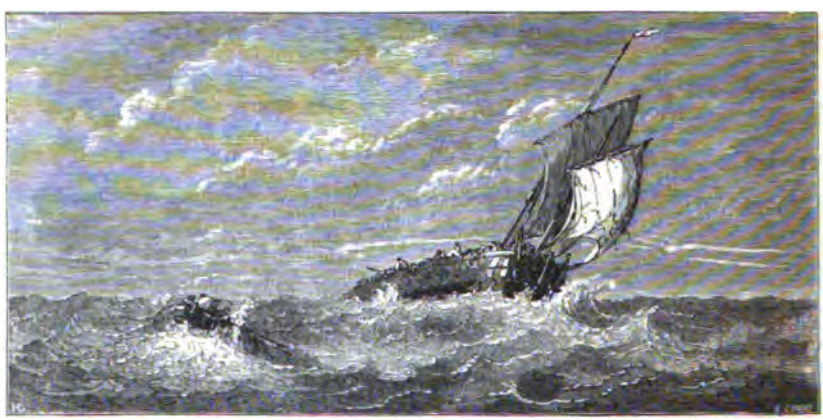
In the grand dialogue of the beautiful Gironde and the majestic Ocean, however keen may be the strife, there nevertheless prevails a certain indefinable gravity and serenity of tone. The graceful rounded waves, with their soft yielding outlines, even in the fullest collision of their waters, awaken no idea of wild or violent action. Is it love or war? We know not.

There is nothing resembling it in Europe, or even in America. The black and gloomy rivers of the West,—especially the Orinoco,—flow contentedly in an everlasting shadow. On the contrary, my Gironde, light and yet gigantic, goes and comes, disports itself, builds up or unbuilds the shore for the amusement and deception of the serious, the wrathful Ocean, which, not entering into the gay nymph's jests, occasionally deals her such severe blows that she takes to flight, and hides herself under the Medoc, or sometimes hurries towards Saintonge, and masks herself in the sand. And then she reäppears, and steals back to Ocean softly. She finds him appeased. It is even allowable to affirm that he retires towards Cordouan to give her confidence, and recall her to his empire.

About Royan and Saint Georges the numerous miniature bays, two and three leagues long, enable them to enjoy their friendly sports. The Gironde can there take care of herself, in tiny hiding-places and innumerable grottoes, where she plays and hides at pleasure.

In perfect solitude, in June, before the arrival of the bathers, I concluded a friendship with these two great personages, and surprised their secrets. In the glorious waste where I felt myself lost, the better to play with my caressing Gironde, the better to pursue her at the curve of the shore, where her waves receded, I threw aside all dignity, and sped along with naked feet.

In those days the place was always much more solitary than it now is. Even in July there were but few bathers. And few or no fishermen. Neither our pilots of Saint Georges nor of Didonne often approached the coast, though their dark sails were frequently visible out at sea. Some sea-birds visited us, and occasionally a shoal of bold



and grotesque porpoises, which flung summersets in the air with laughable audacity; these were my whole society in my morning promenades, when I was observing and making notes for the book which my husband and I had projected.

The sun was already high in the heaven. Feeling somewhat fatigued, I flung myself back upon a sand-hill; nor could there be a softer bed. The sand was so fine, so mobile, that though the wind was light it fell about me like an impalpable dust. But soon my dress was full of it, and even my hand was covered. This set me dreaming. Wherefore, O charming Nature, dost thou wish to bury me? I feel myself already oppressed with the weight of the sifted sand which thou throwest at me laughingly. Yet, at the same time, it seems as

if it would reäwaken me to life, whether it comes from the warm sea, still impregnated with marine odours, or whether it descends from the dune, all balmy with the pollen of flowers.

How charming a volume—it is one of which I have often thought—we could write here: "The Flora of the Landes and Dunes." A meagre Flora if you will, but exquisite, and rich in pungent, penetrating perfumes. So far are these odours of vervain, mint, bindweed, marjolaine, from overcoming you, that, on the contrary, they stimulate in you a nêw sense. Except the little sea-pink, with its strange scent of the East, everything breathes the tone of a rustic idyll; an idyll without enervating softness, and, even in the warmest airs, without languor.

The landscape itself was in entire harmony with the fresh rural balm; vast and yet gentle, it gave birth to very few illusions and mirages, except sometimes in the evening, when the sun burst suddenly through the clouds, as if to celebrate in the heavens the nuptials of the Ocean and the River, in palaces moving upon lofty aërial arches, which linked together two worlds. But too soon you saw these celestial bridges break up, and melt away, and vanish.

Ah, faithful image of the rapid changes undergone by the shifting dune upon which I had taken my seat! Each passing gust of wind destroys its ephemeral constructions. If to-night the tempest should swoop upon us from the depths of the stormy sky, to-morrow the little mountain which now shelters me will have disappeared, and the pretty valley where I have gathered my posy will be filled up.

And yet, here, all things seem to me so human. My good old guardian, Cordouan, which never changes, reässures me, and the charming basins of Royan and Saint Georges, in their very instability, promise you shelter.

Why was my impression of the landes of Gascony, lying between Bordeaux and Biarritz, so different? The moving rampart of sand, forty leagues in length, notwithstanding its mobility, seems inexorable. Not the smallest harbour exists. The great waves, coming from America, beat against the outline of the desolate shores. If they

accumulate sand and *débris*, they do not mould them in opposition to or in accordance with the dunes, like the Ocean and the Gironde. The rivers which flow from the interior have gradually been constrained to yield to the dyke thrown across their channels. They flow parallel to the sea in a southerly direction, so as to pour into it obliquely their dwindling waters. And, like the sea, they have left a sediment which exhales upon the moorland its unwholesome vapours.

I know not if beforehand I had a confused sentiment of these morbid excesses of sadness, in the first journey which I made, before I was twenty years old—a journey from the fresh breezy south of France to the hotter and more concentrated south of Bayonne—but the road across the sands seemed to me dull and interminable.

But, by way of compensation, I enjoyed a view,—a sublime though too distant view,—of our Pyrenees. I skirted them from afar. A gray sky, at the end of October, uniformly clothed in mist, half hid them from me. The carriage, sinking in the soft sand, seemed to swim, to dream. Nothing was astir. No sound. Was Nature asleep? No; for sleep, at all events, breathes. It was rather a profound lethargy. A few rare birds of the marshes flew hither and thither, with their loud whistling voices. In the distance, an old and sad-featured woman, who had been picking up wood, and bent beneath her load, eyed us as we passed. And this was all. The thorny bearded rushes everywhere reared themselves erect, as if they claimed to be the solitary tenants of the desert.

"I know not if I am awake. Certain mirages sweep before my eyes. Above those pools of stagnant water which line the road, the air trembles, and I can see but dimly. And yet I would wish to know what is that yellow flower, half-drowned in the moisture of the marsh. Turned towards the pale sun, which glides onward rayless, it seems as if it yearned to live with it, to catch its gaze,—which every flower desires,—a tiny inner flame, a stronger flame, in which it may for a moment rise above itself, yield up its heart, and feel sure that it has not died without having lived.

"This uniform and constantly recurring flower,—these little pools

of dormant water, which are always the same wherever you come upon them—motionless, foreign to the current of life,—provide you with a monotonous horizon, where, apparently, nothing changes. But has there been no change in myself?

"At times a certain languishing heaviness compels me to close my eyes. Are, then, all the inner activities which I felt in my soul, this very morning, lulled asleep? I do not feel even the inclination to question myself. A singular state of feeling, which, at first, is very sweet. However, I must reason myself out of it. I am conscious of a burning pain in my head; it is agony to follow in my dream the deceptive images which, across that sea of sand, already dim and obscure with the approach of the evening, begin to wander. I would fain emerge from the shadows, and regain the light. These treacherous gleams trouble me too greatly. But ah, poor soul, how shall I release thee?"

Pitiless as destiny this coast must have seemed to the first navi-

gator who came in sight of it, and saw it extending for forty leagues in its funereal whiteness, its desolate mobility. On tempestuous nights, and under the lightning-flash, its rounded crests make sport of the foamy waters and their incessant movement. The mariner thought himself far distant from it, and in safety, when already he was drifting on the perfidious shore. The sea seemed its accomplice. It rushed thither with the enormous forces accumulated in its progress from America to Europe. Irresistibly, it engulfed itself with all its weight in this caldron of the Gulf of Gascony.

With how grateful an eye the imperilled mariner saw the guiding and warning star arise in the midst of the shadowy night! A tranquil star, like the celestial planets! Out in the open sea it menaced no danger. But on the wild reef, this calm radiance led him to believe in the vicinity of a harbour, and conducted him straight to shipwreck.

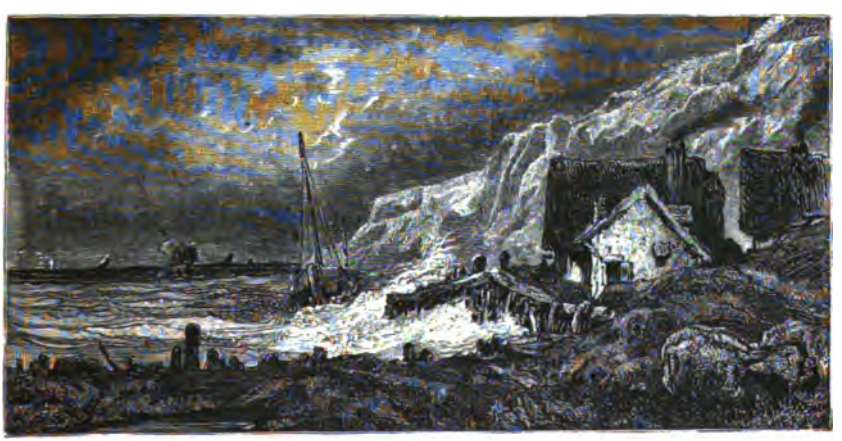
The vigilant watcher, the saviour of numbers of human lives flung to the mercy of the capricious billows, discovered the distinct individuality of the pharos, which could no longer be confounded.

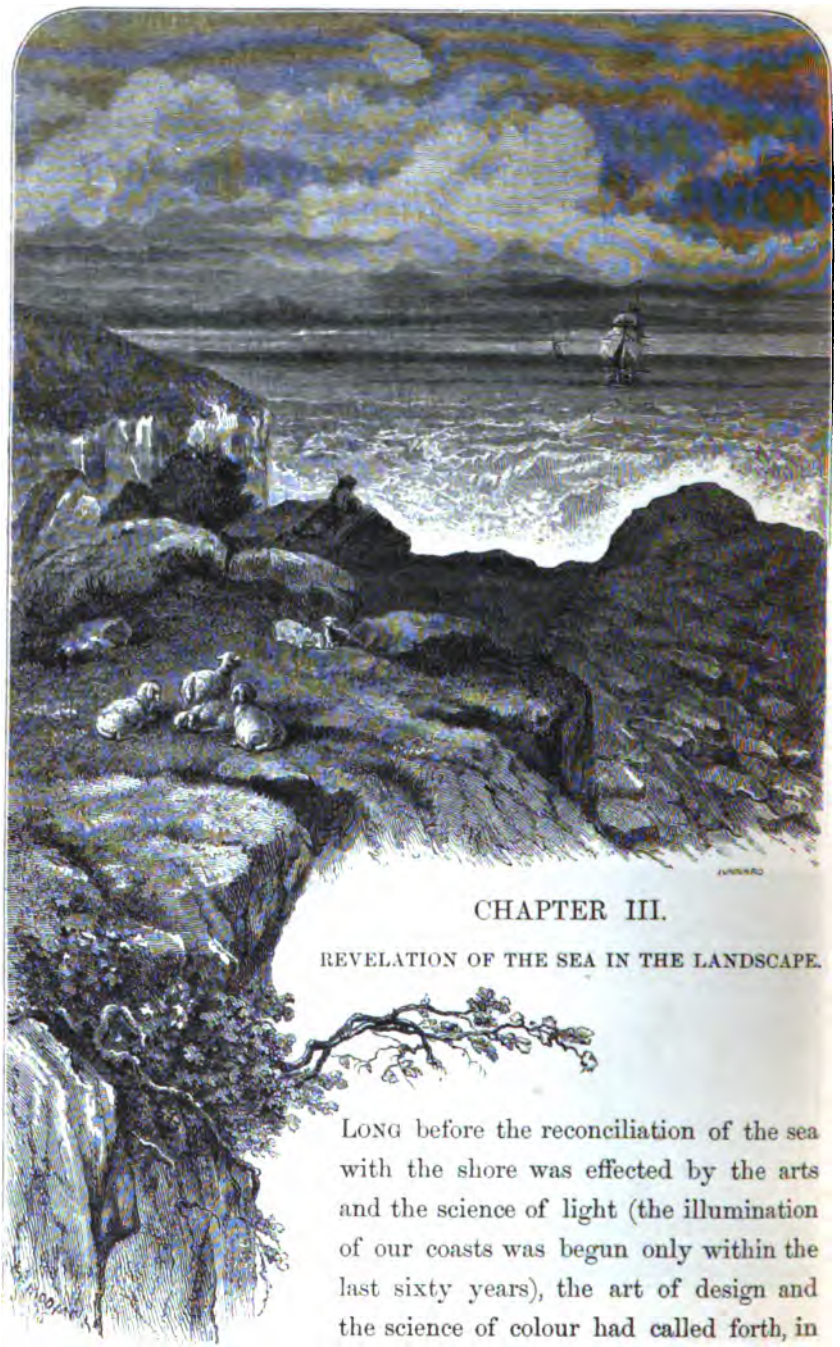
But the fixed star, with its throbbing scintillation, proved no longer treacherous to the mariner steering by its beam. Observe yonder

restless lamp, which flashes into the night, and then, as if exhausted with the effort, diminishes, and dies out, like eyes which gradually close. Not for long. They reöpen, all on fire and bloodshot. But the flame grows white and keen. It cuts like a knife through the densest mists, and dazzles you with its glare. It is CORDOUAN, or it is the EDDYSTONE, which, seated on its sinster rock, keenly surveys the watery expanse. The more fiercely the tempest rages, the darker the night, the more vigilantly does it watch. And not only in front, like the guardian of the shore, but on every side.

For who knows from what quarter the labouring ship may come! The wistful gaze turns to, and searches, all points of the horizon; and minute after minute repeats its warning that against its rocky base the sea beats horribly, and dashes and slays its victims. Woe to him who shall drift into the fatal vortex! Woe to him who approaches it! But towards that fixed star on the harbour-pier which eyes you constantly, turn, if you can, your helm. It summons you into port.

But terrible as the stormy ocean still may be, nowadays, when a threefold belt of light intercrosses its fires, and illuminates the waves, it is no longer hostile. Its reconciliation with the shore has been effected. Not only does it reveal to you the danger, but everywhere it opens up the asylums of the coast. Everywhere, in each shining lighthouse, behold a brother watching restlessly over the safety of all,—of the solitary fisher-bark, as of the ship which serves as a link of communication between nations. Yes, for *all*, the coast which lately was still wild and formidable has become hospitable and humane.



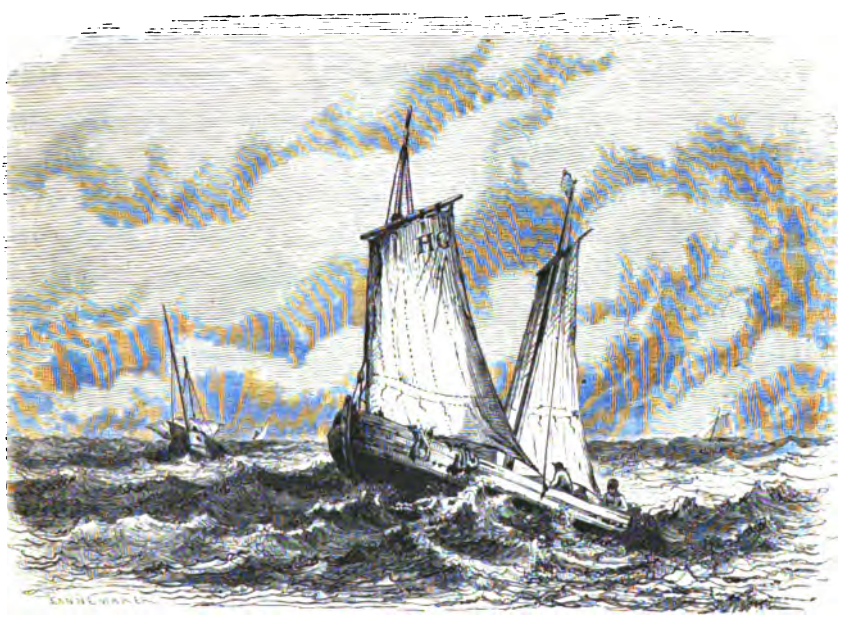


## CHAPTER III.

### REVELATION OF THE SEA IN THE LANDSCAPE.

LONG before the reconciliation of the sea with the shore was effected by the arts and the science of light (the illumination of our coasts was begun only within the last sixty years), the art of design and the science of colour had called forth, in the landscapes of the North, an unexpected revelation. From the

bosom of that gloomy, howling, violent sea, which had hitherto been regarded as impersonal, as nothing but a hostile element, was heard for the first time the respiration of a living being. An even rhythmical respiration in the few days of calm, when heaven and earth and the waters unite in peace; interrupted by harsh murmurs, and wails, and choked sobs, when the tempest, motionless as yet and gloomy, weighs upon, and crushes, the flood with the burden of its leaden clouds. Then, in the midst of the convulsion,—in the violent motion of the storm,—the dirge-like rolling of the waves, the harsh cries and excesses of anger, of the rage of an irritated spirit confident in its strength, but doomed to see itself handed over powerless to the mercy of the blind hurricane, and of the inert reef which shatters it, and hurls it back in spray.



To whom should it be given to seize and render in their grand, impressive truth, these struggles and tragic dramas of Infinity? To those who were the true sons of the Ocean, who felt themselves gradually elevated above its storms, like the ship which we see rising slowly above the horizon, and growing indistinct and trembling on

the shifting waves. Too faithful image! And is not the vessel whose canvas woos the wind, and which glides securely over the wave, much freer from the caprices of the changeful flood than the low, immovable plain of Holland, "everywhere on a level with the water; everywhere impregnated with water, until it is, so to speak, a congealed sea"?

If, on one of its days of fury, the true sea arouses itself, and hurls its waves upon these broken shores, which seem so many floating islands, they will assuredly be submerged, as happened in the fourteenth century, when the Zuydersee forced an entrance, spread far and wide, and engulfed a portion of the rising soil in its gloomy depths.

The first artist who put the soul of the sea upon canvas, Backhuysen, shows us nothing of this melancholy instability,—of the half-drowned earth which to-morrow, perhaps, will be completely buried. He thinks only of the power of the State; and seats it triumphant on the subject main. The banners float in all directions, as if hung out for a festival in honour of the conquest of the waves. It is Holland, Queen of the World.

Ruysdaël, engrossed with a single thought, reveals in all its verity the grave and angry sea, which rolls against the uncertain dyke its monstrous waves, still heavy with the sands of the dune. Its weight is sufficient to crush the beautiful ship which struggles like an athlete; it is not cold, nor green, with the glaucous eyes of the great Northern Sea. The latter seems ever involved in thought. Of a sullen red, under the black sky which would fain convert day into night, it hurries along, loaded with electric gleams.

By way of contrast, and as if to rest his eyes after the too vertiginous spectacle, he has painted in another picture simply a line of sand-hills, pale in the waning light, pale at the approach of the storm. Is it Haarlem of which we catch sight in the distance, in a fantastic obscurity?

On the shore, all is motionless and silent. The solitary individual who climbs the narrow path makes but little noise. He travels with a slow and melancholy pace through the melancholy landscape.

The unstable sand-hills, the sea heavy with storms,—such are the

works of Ruysdaël treasured in the Louvre. But are those masterpieces *still* there? (May 29th, 1870.) In the barbarous annihilation of all which France held dear and sacred, have not these too disappeared in the flames?

That pale meadow-scene which I saw elsewhere (in the Viardot Collection), so touching with its half-veil of mist,—that may yet survive.

Poor land of Holland! Such is the cry which issues from the heart as we gaze upon these admirable seascapes,—so deep in their sadness, yet always remaining human.

England is the sister of Holland. But being more enveloped, I think, in mists, owing to the warm waters of the Gulf Stream, it did not recognize until a later period the grandeur of its maritime horizons.

I have not the audacity to characterize the great landscape-artists of the country which, I hope, will warmly welcome this book, previous even to its appearance in France. But who knows not that, from her tranquil island, England first saw, in the works of Calcott, the sea in its calmer moods and evening glories? In the pictures of Turner, it grows animated, and gloomy, and menaces us with storm. And then, suddenly, in his second manner, it lashes itself into fury, and struggles to escape from the Northern nature, by pouring dazzling rainbows of colour on the rising and setting of the sun.

Who is not familiar, also, with the beautiful water-sketches of Cattermole, and the numerous admirable engravings, which are in reality so many genuine pictures, owing to the play of their *chiar-oscuro*? With black and white and gray, the English landscape-painters can reproduce anything,—can reproduce the grandest effects of the sea; can render most impressively the wandering mists, and the rent clouds, pierced by the wind, and suddenly hurried far away; the pallid gleams which break up the sombre night; the distances blending and confused in fog and haze. We see the soft progress of the light; the crayon gradually illuminates its dull shadows with the gleams of the brush. The second half of the picture alone is full of radiance; but even *this* radiance shines through vapours still.

A piercing flash of glory dazzles me. See how, without any transition, I have flown to the South, and now stand in front of its coruscating sea. May it not justly be said that its sparks seem hovering to and fro? To the already too powerful sun the inexorable mirror sends back flame for flame. The conflagration spreads from the waters to the barren mountain, which, with its funereal red, reverberates the fire. Where shall we find any shade? The Elysian foliage of the pale olive-tree suffers the keen quick light to dart beneath it. Mystery and freshness are wholly wanting.

Is this dazzling Mediterranean most striking on its Italian shores and in their deep gulfs, or on the sterile coast of Provence, which faces thirsty Africa? I vainly seek an answer to this question from the masters of the apotheosis of light. In the open daylit landscapes where it ought to break forth, I see nothing but dull, dim effects. The colour does not live. You derive no impression of the ardour of the climate.

Under the triumphant sky of the South, we must wait for the undefined hours of dawn or twilight, when the sleeping country has a presentiment of the day which it does not yet see, or which it is about to lose, when evening dies away in the violets, the roses, and the indefinable emerald hues of Nature. The moments, however, are too

brief for the artist to seize and fix them. While he is studying, a total change takes place. The pastel alone can render them with the necessary quickness, and record the various gradations and rapid diminutions of light and colour. The moment the first sunbeam emerges, the splendours of the firmament disappear. On the earth, every object, chilled by the intense radiation peculiar to these serene nights, as soon as it is touched by the light and its heat, absorb it rapidly, without yielding back any reflection. Later, white uniform vapours overspread the landscape, so that none but black shadows can make their way. In the evening, these vapours are animated and tremble with strange tones; but while, in the sunset, all things grow enkindled, on the mountain opposite, night already descends,—its gray shadows preceding its palenesses.

You would mistrust such sudden phantasmagoric changes, if you stood in front of the masterpieces of Claude Lorraine, who, they say, painted his sunsets as they broke on the sea of Italy. Under porticoes recalling the villas of the Roman cardinals—palaces which have already succumbed to Time, and scattered about them their capitals and broken columns—the rays of a summer evening glide and accumulate. His somewhat conventional architecture, belonging to no particular epoch, when bathed in so warm an atmosphere acquires a great nobility, and frequently assumes the most majestic reliefs. In the ruins strewed over the ground there is nothing sad. Alive with burning lustre, the stones seem to move, as if bent of their own accord on occupying their original positions. Beyond, the calmly slumbering sea reflects the fires of heaven. And yet, without hardness. Between the kindling sky and kindling sea floats the tremulous air. It softens every outline, and veils, without diminishing, the vivacities of the light. On the contrary, it augments their effect, and, as it were, makes the landscape breathe. All those marbles which now yield back the heat they have absorbed seem to respire. The sun goes down, and yet not a sign is apparent of the decline of day.

And is this what Claude Lorraine saw on the desert of the Roman Campagna which he studied for so long a period? The sea was too far distant for him to catch its reflections. Through the heavy effluvia

which creep low down along the Pontine marshes, singular effects of light are visible in the evening; a phantasmagoric change of colours which you see in no other region. It is neither gold nor purple; but deadened tints, in which violet predominates, diffuse their gloom abroad.

Undoubtedly, Claude Lorraine composed his pictures with an uncontrolled imagination. Among the monuments of Italy, he was inspired by his recollections of the North; of that nature less favoured, it would seem, and much slower to gain vitality and warmth, which preserves and retains the rays of the sun in the denser strata of its atmosphere, and reluctantly permits them to reäscend. Long does she reflect upon the earth, which ceases to see the sun, the consolations of its light. In the South there is nothing to be compared to this; it is a theatrical curtain, which an invisible hand incessantly lowers or raises on the majestic scene of the world.

But, at all events, if this Mediterranean be too luminous in its daytide radiance, and if it too quickly fades in its evening glories, it will yield itself to the artist in its fits of wrath! Surely *he* may seize its violent genius, who caused himself to be bound to the vessel's mast that he might fathom its tempests! Yet Joseph Vernet saw nothing but a green and implacable flood.....

How many times have I myself turned aside my glance from its fury—a fury all the more sinister because it breaks out in open day, like that of the Atlantic at the Cape of Good Hope! The heavens do not share in its convulsions. The sun shines, and illuminates indifferently the struggle between life and death.

In our more temperate climates, when the sea grows angry, when it roars and thunders, and assumes a wan ghastly aspect, both heaven and earth are also vexed, and participate in its torments. The heavy clouds bring down the vault of heaven to the very waves; the winds do not hiss, as in the south, with a strident voice through the scanty foliage, but they speak in a deep bass; they lament their own destinies. All Nature joins in the gloom and suffering of the waters.

And such a sea is in better accordance with our hearts—is the true image of our life of struggle and combat. The North, by concentrating our soul beneath its shadows, adds to its energies, places all its powers at the service of Action, and too often also profits by our pain.

Who knew this better than he whose soul made all Nature human for us,—our beloved, our lamented Paul Huet? Never did any other person possess in so high a degree the feeling of its inner melancholies. All his life he pursued the spirit of the waters. Born in Normandy, and in a district not far removed from the ancient margins of the sea, he cherished each little pool forgotten by the rain, and lying in the shadow of the long drooping grass.

The open daylight dazzled him. He was the true son of melancholy seasons. The heavy rains which drive most people home, and induce them to close their doors, had a strong attraction for him. He saw the landscape all the more clearly through the insatiable showers which apparently wished to inundate Nature. You see them represented with startling truth in his "Flood at Saint Cloud." Will the bare and motionless trees ever grow green again? Will the earth beneath them ever renew its grassy sward? All is very desolate,—desolate with the dull gray waters of the marsh. They cheat the bluebird himself, who sweeps across them, and skims the surface with his wings. Continue thy flight, little fisher, for here nothing is alive; everything is vowed to death.

This great artist always saw, or thought he saw, the meaning of the waters under all their forms,—clouds, rains, mists.

What more beautiful in its autumn melancholy than that "Entrance to the Forest," admired by everybody at the last exhibition of his works, which is now suspended above my working-table, which has often suggested my solitary thoughts?

The trees have lost all their leaves; it is already November; the lower portions of the forest are growing brighter, though not as yet with the cold rays of winter. The deep leafy summer shadows have preserved the moisture of the earth up to a late period, and set the rich grasses growing in all directions. The mosses mingle with them, and cover with velvet both sides of the avenue. Beautiful red cows enjoy,

with bended heads, the pleasant pasture. How deep a calm broods over the solitary landscape! At the end of the long alley the radiance of the declining evening touches with a pale gold the light floating mist which an enfeebled sun cannot draw up to itself. The background of the landscape, which is somewhat open, is veiled under these vapours of a transparent mystery. It floats in the distance, almost filled with warmth by the gilded mist.

This was his idea when his mind was comparatively tranquil,—the rare flash of an irremediably wounded soul. His greatest works seem the fruit of a hidden grief which would fain have been silent, but betrayed itself in the bosom of Nature.

Paul Huet was the interpreter of her tears. They are visible in all his works; sometimes dissembled under a kind of half-smile; sometimes so heavy, so laden with sombre reflections, that the entire scene is wrapped in gloom.

I speak here of his feverish dream of the marshes of the Somme, which the Museum should certainly possess. It represents the final ebb of the waters, which are rapidly withdrawing from their former resting-place. Reeds and rushes now thrive upon the low sandy level. Flooded and exposed at each alternate tide, they stretch afar their dull vegetation, whose doubtful verdure is in places spotted as with rust. At the foot of the sand-hill, which rises in one corner of the picture, sleep the slate-coloured waters. We feel that they will stir no more; that the eddying tempest will pass over without disturbing them. Everything holds them captive. Clouds, black as loadstones, weigh upon them; they cannot move; it is the dull immobility of the Maremma, obscured with all the shadows of the North.

A young woman, with a feverish complexion, whose slow action is inspired by a melancholy tenderness, replaces in her bosom, and wraps up, her pale new-born child. The father, standing erect, at a few paces off, is absent from the touching scene. For he is gazing into the waters with a dreamy gaze. His lank shaggy dog howls after a gull which threads its way in the depth of the tenebrous firmament.

Like the clouds, we remain fascinated before the immense sadness of this work. The painter's soul seems enshrined in it.

Yet I know something sadder still. In the furthest recesses of an inundated forest, whither only a kind of greenish semi-daylight penetrates, a water-bird, alone upon a rock, retires, as it were, into his own heart, inconsolable. And why, great and beloved artist, for it is thyself whom I still recognize here? "Ah yes! inconsolable, and lamenting all things—life, and the powerlessness of art. To have yearned to infuse the human soul in Nature—but the two are two infinities! The one is in myself; the other, which I pursued so incessantly, and which has always fled from my pursuit, has finally eluded me. Hence it is that I am inconsolable."

If through so great a genius Painting cannot express the meanings of Nature, will Poetry come to its assistance? The rhythm of the seas, for example—the cadence of the ebbing and flowing tide, which rises, swollen with sighs—can verse give utterance to these? Or can it paint all the splendours of the shore: its sequestered coves—its leafy bays—its bold, precipitous rocks—its shadowy caverns—or the grand triumphal arches, under which the waters roll in placid pomp?

Shall we find what we want in that wonderfully successful poem, Lord Byron's "Corsair"? It is filled with a mighty breath, with the masculine freedom of the waves which know no bounds; and upon the wave, the daring, the venturous hope of him who spurns the earth, and in the ocean recognizes his country:—

> "O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
> Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,
> Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
> Survey our empire, and behold our home!

These are our realms, no limits to their sway—
Our flag the sceptre all who meet obey.
Ours the wild life in tumult still to range
From toil to rest, and joy in every change.
Oh, who can tell? not thou, luxurious slave!
Whose soul would sicken o'er the heaving wave;
Not thou, vain lord of wantonness and ease!
Whom slumber soothes not—pleasure cannot please—
Oh, who can tell, save he whose heart hath tried,
And danced in triumph o'er the waters wide,
The exulting sense—the pulse's maddening play,
That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way?"

But even this boundless hope is not the Infinite. Who, then, here on earth may attain it? Each impulse, each effort of the wing apparently pierces the skies, and soars beyond them. But the soul sickens, and falls back. The Infinite is still concealed.

Hence the melancholy of Paul Huet, of his bird which essayed the infinite of the ocean, and dies, self-consumed, upon the rock.

Hence, the funeral hymn which rises on the margin of the sea—of the sea which, from its infinity, unable to seize upon aught, gives up its treasures, and nourishes the world with the best of its own blood:—

Lorsque le pélican lassé d'un long voyage,
Dans les brouillards du soir retourne à ses roseaux,
Ses petits affamés courent sur le rivage,
En le voyant au loin s'abattre sur les eaux.
Lui gagnant à pas lents une roche élevée,
De son aile pendante abritant sa couvée,
Pêcheur mélancolique, il regarde les cieux.
Le sang coule à longs flots de sa poitrine ouverte
En vain il a des mers fouillé la profondeur:
L'océan était vide et la plage déserte;
Pour toute nourriture il apporte son cœur.
Sombre et silencieux, étendu sur la pierre,
Partageant à ses fils ses entrailles de père,
Dans son amour sublime il berce sa douleur;
Et regardant couler sa sanglante mamelle,
Sur son festin de mort il s'affaisse et chancelle,

Ivre de volupté, de tendresse, et d'horreur.
Mais parfois au milieu du divin sacrifice,
Fatigué de mourir dans un trop long supplice,
Il craint que ses enfants ne le laissent vivant;
Alors il se soulève, ouvre son aile au vent,
Et se frappant le cœur avec un cri sauvage,
Il pousse dans la nuit un si funèbre adieu,
Que les oiseaux des mers désertent le rivage,
Et que le voyageur attardé sur la plage,
Sentant passer la mort se recommande à Dieu."

[*Imitated.*]

When, weary with her day-long wanderings,
Through evening-mists the pelican returns
Home to her reedy nest, and all her young,
Gaping with hunger, hasten to the shore,
What time they see her o'er the waters swoop.
She with slow steps a rock projecting gains,
And with her drooping wing protects her brood,
While with a wistful gaze she notes the skies.
Fast from her open breast the blood-drops fall;
In vain has she close-searched the watery depths;
Ocean was empty, desolate the shore;
And for her young she brings them but her heart.
Silent and sad, and stretched upon the rock,
She 'mong her sons her very self divides,
Stilling her anguish in her love sublime;
As from her breast the life-blood swiftly flows,
She with the death-feast totters and grows faint,
With joy, and tenderness, and horror drunk.
But sometimes in the midst of her divine
Self-sacrifice, and weary with the long,
Slow punishment, she fears that death may be
The outcome of that hunger of her brood.
Then quick she rises,—opening wide her wings,
Striking her bosom with a wild sharp cry,
And breathing on the night a sad farewell!
So sad that all the sea-birds quit the shore,
And the lone traveller lingering on the strand
Feels death pass by, and softly recommends
His soul to God!

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MAREMMA.

**Ricorditi di me che son la Pia**
**Siend mi fe, diofecemi Maremma.**

THAT sorrowful Shadow of the *Via Dolorosa*, which keeps apart from those other Shadows,—which interrupts its moaning towards God, its *miserere*, to speak to Dante, and demand of him some tidings of the world of the living, has not as yet been able to obtain its release. Though it has suffered severely in its slow, lingering agony, it still wanders on the bank of the uncertain waters, and under the heavy vapours of the Maremma.

How strange, how gloomy, how fatal is the power of those stagnant waters! They chain you to their side, and there consume you. They are, so to speak, enchanted. The soul, overburdened with the languors of its dream, or disturbed with a vague delirium, neither wishes nor is able to obtain its freedom. It yields itself up to the

perilous circle which encloses it, and by degrees descends to the shadows of death.

But are the effects of these morbid waters everywhere the same? Have not men erred in confounding them? Beside the brackish pools, forgotten by the sea,—in the marshes which lazy rivers leave behind them,—under an uniform aspect snares widely differing from each other are concealed.

Upon the Pyrenean landes, bristling as they do with a stunted, thorny, bushy flora, and upon their desolate lagoons, strange visions start into existence. These are the landes of the Sorcerer. He and his kind flock thither in the wan gloom of night, whirl around in the wild orgies of the Witches' Sabbat, and blend their howls with those of the wind. They chase the tide of ocean along the sandy ridge, and hurry to and fro without being able to check their movement. They are tossed about in the vortices of the tempest; while burning flashes leap from the red tresses which the mad waltz electrifies.

On the contrary, the torpor of heavy sleep broods upon the Vendean marshes. These, a true miniature of Holland, are intersected with ditches, and floating marshes, and dykes half-hidden by the ash-tree and the dwarf willow; so that the earth is everywhere concealed, and seems nothing more than an accident.

The huts of the inhabitants float upon the surface. And if their owners emerge from them, it is to go on board their boats. There is little, very little movement. The rose-rushes mown, and the hemp woven, Nature seems to have given over work. But her repose is melancholy and oppressive. Vapours float above the motionless waters. In the evening, when they crawl along the silent canals, can you see clearly through them the fermented masses of the hemp? All objects appear confused in the lingering fog, and loath, as it were, to move themselves. These are not white wreaths of smoke which coil themselves in the distance, under the dark shadow of the ash-trees. They would not rise so quickly. No, it is she; it is the *Niobe* which glides through the fog. Does she not seem to be coming in this direction; to be drawing near? From the hollow willow-tree which she

sweeps past issues a singular cry. It is the voice of the screech-owl. Accept it always as a warning. "Fever was there yesterday, and to-day the head is very heavy. The Niobe knows well what is coming. If she is thinking of *me*, this very night will she seize me, and bury me in her white veil, the shroud which she carries for every corpse."

See, then, how widely different is this twofold picture: sands, water, and inundated earth bear little resemblance to the Italian marshes lying on their volcanic soil, burned up by fires, and oxidized by metals, the salts of the sea, and the acid or sulphurous vapours of thermal springs, which, at certain points, still force their way through the fissures of the earth. They rise from the inner depths to make the lakes seethe and boil, though already these are heated and fermented by the rays of a fervid sun.

Such is the Tuscan Maremma, in whose vicinity I am writing. Until very recently it extended along the littoral as far as Terracina, and from Leghorn, by Orbitello and Civita Vecchia, to unite with the Pontine swamps. Inland, it was found at the bottom of enclosed valleys, or it strayed up the mountain-sides, and hung over the suspended towns, formerly so flourishing, its veil of death.

I am too near it at Pisa not to yield to its temptation. Its fatal power, checked and restrained by winter, has not yet been asserted. In this early part of April the nights are marked by curious gusts of raw air, which temper the rising fermentations. I can breathe its atmosphere without danger. I start for Grossetto, the queen-city of the malaria.

The road leading thither is by no means dull or melancholy at the outset. And yet the Maremma was there, was everywhere, around the romantic castle of Rosignano, at the foot of the verdurous hill of Salvette. You must not trust to it. Nothing can be more agreeable to-day than this little district of gently-swelling hills, decorated with the freshness of the Spring. The corn-fields in their emerald green, the delicate festoons of the young vines which lend their support to the weak and still bending fruit-trees, open up to us a completely new landscape. Thus, as by a road of flowers, we are brought to the frontier of Pisa, to Tollonica. And is it possible that the Maremma

can exist in such a scene? Yes: in the vicinity of Celina the people point it out to you, lying on the edge of the sea, and under a wood of pines, which struggles boldly to contract its limits. The smiling image before your eyes effaces these last gloomy spots of the horizon.

But insensibly you glide onward. A vague sensation, which it is impossible to define, warns you that a change has taken place. Vegetation is either pallid, or wears a dark brown hue. According to its level, the nature of the soil changes. Here it is a breadth of meadow-land, from which, however, the young and charming verdure of the fields is absent. Close by, over a perfectly smooth surface, and in a pool of dazzling water, black tufts of rigid reeds are growing at wide intervals. Further on, the soil is rugged, and the herbage of a colour varying between green and gray. This herbage seems to have thrown up little hillocks of refuse, so as to escape the fermentation of the waters, and absorb only their vapours.

The most beautiful aspect of the Maremma is at the same time its wildest—namely, when the *dead water* which you are in search of, and would fain interrogate, is covered with the shade of arborescent ferns, cork-oaks, and sprays fallen from the brambles. The whole resembles an ill-tended wood, or a copse or thicket which has been left to grow wild. And so, when you thought the landscape was on the point of betraying its secret and answering your question, the evil fairy who lurks in its recesses tells you that there is nothing before you, nothing but a wood like any other. Above the sun shines, and the sky is blue. Is it anticipation or reality? It seems, somehow or other, that it is not the same day here as elsewhere. There is a sort of grayness in the air, and a certain something which makes the blood run more slowly. The trees are not bright and fresh, as trees *should* be. If they do not reveal their sufferings, as in Bresse in Poland, their foliage is dark with melancholy. In the warm climates of the South, where the winter is clement, it should last for several successive years, instead of falling off in the autumn to revive in the spring. Nothing of the charming renewal of our woods is visible here.

On leaving the horizon of the sea, which the road at first had skirted, the scene assumes a still drearier character. In the hollows

and windings of the mountain, into which the road plunges, the heat of summer prevails already. The sea-breeze no longer brings its freshness into the imprisoned localities; and all the rocks, daughters of fire, seem

as if they still exhaled its breath. You might say of Massa, which hangs suspended to the mountain-side, that it has felt the flame. Its houses and its ancient walls glow with warm red colours. Enveloped in their burning tones, Massa rises sadly enough. A city, sumptuous of old with marble monuments, is, after repeated scourges of war and conflagration, nothing better than a sepulchre. Death entered it on every side; from the valley, through the marshes which pent up the waters either slackened or diverted in their course; from the mountain, through the undefinable morbid vapours escaping from the volcanic soil. No one durst set their foot within it at the close of the last century. It was a heap of ruins. The traveller, forewarned, hastened his steps, repeating the old adage: "*Massa guarda e passa.*"

When the great plain appears where Grossetto is situated, with its dark red belt of battlements, you fancy that you perceive some lessening of the weight which has pressed upon you. A striking feature of Grossetto, next to its beautiful and time-embrowned walls, is, that from a distance it seems to lean against the mountain. A spur of the Apennines projecting behind the town, and winding round in the direction of the sea, lends to it a framework, so to speak, of peculiar nobleness.

The veil of the morning was not completely lifted up, so that all things lay hushed in silence, and the uniform plain wore a vaporous

grandeur, mingled with a certain feeling of sadness. The whole scene had the transparency, the soft milky tint of the opal. My eye sought in every direction the hidden waters. Sanitary works, however, have banished them afar, and the levels still inundated by the winter rains had drained themselves dry. I was told I must go on much further, for that here the Maremma was conquered. And yet my gaze still curiously searched for it. The gray uncultivated fields, barren and gray at a time of the year when, under the Italian climate, all Nature should be in full flower, had a singular effect. Is, then, this hilly, rugged, bristling soil incapable of producing anything? It has but just been exposed to the light, and though free at length from the swampy waters, is still lying under the curse of an evil enchantment. It awaits its true resurrection in the indescribable sadness of things half-dead.

The arrival of strangers in a town which is seldom visited brought the entire population to their doors. And now I inter-

rogated the human countenance as I had formerly interrogated the earth. It revealed nothing. There was no languor in the movements, no pallor on any face. In the crevices and crannies of the walls, flowers, sown by the winds or the birds, waved to and fro in the genial air. In the gardens the lilac shed its balm. Life seemed to expand on every side.

Why then do I see, in the centre of the town, a mournful symbol? And of what is she dying, yonder youthful female, so pathetic in her drooping attitude? She has already glided so far downward on the road of shadows, that without other help than her own she can no longer check her descent. A powerful arm, the arm of a warrior, uplifts the beautiful frame, which, incapable of self-exertion, would fall to the ground. But of what, then, is she dying? "*Ricorditi di me!*" These words returned to my mind. I forgot the perfume of the lilac. I was lost in a reverie.

"Do not leave us yet," said our amiable host. "Wait until evening. It is after sunset that you will see the country revealed in all its truthfulness."

On this plain, where no water is visible, in the semi-twilight which prevails, light wreaths of smoke, scarcely perceptible at first, are seen here and there to rise or fall. By degrees they increase in dimensions, and wander about—but slowly, revolving on themselves—like one who is looking all around him. In the evening breeze, the smoke from many a fireside trembles or steals afar. The white smoke-wreaths of the earth continue their slow and silent march, like the march of phantoms. And now, behold, some two, or three, or more, join themselves together. In time the scattered wreaths have become a long creeping vapour, which gradually enlarges, and stretches further and further. In its folds the earth will soon be completely shrouded.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE EXPIATION.

"Nous ne vivons pas; nous mourons."
[We do not live; we die.]

This melancholy answer, addressed to a traveller when crossing the desert of the Pontine marshes, and astonished at meeting there with living men and women, recalls to me the icy sentence which an inhabitant of the Tuscan Maremma pronounced upon himself, between two fits of shuddering: "I have just taken my dose of quinine. If I have a second attack, to-morrow I shall lie three feet underground."

A harsh and sombre contradiction! What, in this paradise of light—in this enchanting month, when all things aspire to live—to meet with nought but death! At home, the rosy June is still the indecisive season when spring and summer blend together their uncertainties. Here, on the coast of Central Italy, it is already the torrid season. Yesterday, Nature invited you to gather her flowers; to-day she says, "The corn is ripe; quick, ply your scythes, and gather your harvest!"

But in the low levels of the Maremma I look in vain for the reaper's cottage. Before me and behind me spreads an empty and

silent solitude. And the towns are also mute. Grossetto and others, which were still alive and peopled in April, recall in summer the destroyed cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii.

The reason is that a fatal hour has already sounded, and all the inhabitants of the Maremma have fled towards the mountains. One might say that an enemy had suddenly appeared. Though nothing is astir on the horizon, or on the infinite area of the plain, in the white vapours of the Maremma all have recognized the dangerous Phantom. She never fails to come at her appointed hour. On the dawn of the first day of summer (June 21st) she annually awakens. And now she wanders incessantly from the sea to the hills. Under every variety of form she will follow you. Is she not in the air which you breathe, in that warm water which refuses to quench your thirst? Is it not this evil genius which offers a sweet repose near the moisture of the lakes? You sleep; you arouse yourself, with your head heavy and your arms powerless. With a sombre smile she places in your hands the sheaves and the flowers.

But is not he whom that deadly smile has stricken already hers?

It is best to quit everything and to journey forth, never looking behind, never redescending until the autumn, about November, when the malaria shall be lulled asleep. But who, then, shall gather in the harvest?

From the sea, meantime, a human flood advances. One population goes; behold, another comes. Only for a moment, it is true; for some ten or twelve days at most. Twenty thousand free harvesters, Mantuans and Luccans, hasten, at the peril of their lives, and with an unresting hand, to reap and bind up the sheaves. Among this people, who have so often been the plaything of Chance, there is an undefinable attraction in constantly tempting Fortune, in entrusting themselves to the lottery of Fate. They come, moreover, from the land of fever. And, mayhap, they may escape the malaria, and return home enriched.

But in the closed-up house, which is dark all day, and into which the vapours of the Maremma enter through the low and narrow door, no one in the critical hours can feel reässured. In July and August,

when the sky is constantly on fire, when the humid earth fermenting spreads abroad its unwholesome emanations, when the waters of the lakes seethe, and Night stalks abroad in flames, you see great fires alight on every hearth. All around, the shadows slowly move, and dare not leave them. They seem occupied in conjuring some evil spirit.

And yet it is the hour when Nature seems inclined to be gracious, when the sea-breeze rises, and in the evening somewhat lightens the atmosphere. Would it not be better to breathe the air out of doors? No; it is now that it is most to be feared, that we have most reason to protect ourselves against it. On the very wind which cools you with its freshness is borne the poisonous breath. It does not rise to any height. In calm weather it floats in the lower regions, within the reach of human respiration. In the night it wanders to and fro, and steals to your pillow. It has become your guest, and your guest it will remain. If you look, you will see on the damp walls a gray impalpable dust, which soon springs into animation, finds its way into your blood, and slowly strikes you down.

Yet happy is he who knows only the languors of intermittent fever! In these potent climates, too frequently what to-day is but a shudder, to-morrow will be fire, delirium, and rapid disorganization. The enemy no longer attempts to disguise herself. She is no more the insidious spirit, but the terrible magician. She suddenly appears before your startled eyes, reveals to you the blackness of the night, and the gasping furnace into which she is about to plunge you.

How many of those who have garnered the field of the Maremma will never see their homes again! Every day, bowed and hurt, harassed and burned, seeking, in the fiercest hours of noon, the shadow of the thicket, which, two paces distant, veils the deadly waters, they have delivered themselves improvidently into the power of disease,—of death. She has her great harvest-days, when the active African wind comes to her aid, and spreads abroad the effluvia of the marshes.

This wind, which is no other than the Sirocco, must have known the exact time when to blow with burning breath. It comes straight from the South. At sea it was simply a flame. But as it approaches

the shore, it encounters the Maremma,—its perishing waters, its thick but liquid mud, which, in its apparent immobility, is a frightful centre of fermentation and swarming organisms.

Upon these waters and upon this mud the Sirocco then sets to work. It penetrates them, it kindles them, it swells them, it makes them boil and smoke. The horizon disappears under the veil of their gray vapours. In coming thus into contact with fire, life and death simultaneously change places. Some beings die immediately; others spring into existence, but shortly perish also. The lower vegetation, having suddenly ripened, yields up its spores, and leaves it to the wind to guide them whither it will. The wind, overloaded, would gladly halt. But from the sea other waves of air come up to impel and drive it forward. Charged with the floating dust, it advances from the Maremma to the hills. On the way, the dust prepares to germinate. For this purpose it needs only a little earth. Heat and humidity are sufficient for it; and wherever it meets with these, it pauses, and grows, and multiplies.

The sun has set. Night has fallen. The wind continuously rolls onward its waves of fire. You would fain breathe. All is blank. You turn in the direction of the sea. In vain. Thence come the Sirocco and the sensation of fire. Often this will last for several days successively. Nor is the calm which succeeds a whit more wholesome. The air, then immovable, and dilated to an excess by the heat—moist, heavy, and clogged by an undefinable something that mingles with it —weights every one of your limbs with lead. At the slightest movement, the invisible water in which you are bathing seems to pour over you. You experience an indescribable uneasiness. You lie prostrate and powerless. The atmosphere which surrounds you has no power to renew your energies, nothing to give you. All circulation in *it* and in *you* seems arrested.

Invisible also, but, alas! too real, fall those germs which the wind can no longer hold suspended. They find you quite prepared to receive them. The drops of sweat standing upon your clammy skin are so many tiny reservoirs into which they may introduce them-

selves. By means of the current of your respiration, they make their way into the interior, they enter your lungs. He who thought himself the favourite child of earth, is abandoned to their wicked will by his naked and defenceless epidermis. Up above the deadly waters, the nightingale sings, and builds her nest. The buffalo plunges into the fermented slime, and swims in it well pleased. Man alone fails. The heavy sleep which does but too readily overtake him is a danger,—and, perhaps, the greatest of all dangers. It is in this lethargic repose that life abandons us; we no longer feel its breath.

In a few days,—it may be to-morrow,—the shudder of fever will extend wherever the Sirocco has breathed, wherever it has carried the exhalations of the Maremma, and poured abroad its seeds. But what then *are* these imperceptible germs which so readily mix with our blood, and do not distinguish it from the mud of their marshes? In order that *they* may live, at regular periods they absorb your vital warmth, your strength, and seem to quench their thirst at your expense. An icy cold warns you of their awakened existence. The Sirocco may return, and for several hours the July sun smite earth with its rays; you do not feel them, and yet, *within*, you burn!—"Give me some drink! some drink!"—An inextinguishable thirst devours you. It is just as if all the water of your body had evaporated. Gradually, however, your rigid limbs unbend. You feel a keen desire for shade. You think that the atmosphere around you has suddenly changed. Ah, what happiness! Is the torture, then, all over?—Hot gusts, apparently rising from some space of burning sand, begin to pour upon you, and now it is *externally* that you burn. Where is your ague-fit? Where are its agonies? You pray for their return. Again you ask for water, but it is that you may plunge into it. From every pore in your skin issues a dart of fire!

Happily, it is generally in the day-time, and most frequently in the morning, that the fever seizes you. In my three years' experience of intermittent fever, I do not remember to have had one attack of the shuddering fit at night. Thus you enjoy, at all events, the consolations of the day. Light seems necessary also for the atoms which have

taken possession of you. They seem to incline towards it, like the plant, and like the plant they seek its aid. A complete evolution of their existence appears to operate in a few hours. Is not this regulated perturbation which seizes and leaves you already a revelation? These intermittencies seem to the patient the resting-times of the enemy living within him.

The passive incubation of the germs of each new generation, which in its turn grows into activity, and draws all towards it, interrupts the circulation of your blood, absorbs its heat, and the water in which it bathes. In the access of burning heat, you seem to feel in your veins that whirling life of the ephemeræ, which it makes you giddy to scrutinize in a drop of water.

Such are the different phases of the fever, so well marked, and so distinct. At first, the ague-fit, and burning thirst; next, the tossing and devouring fire, and the mirages of the water,—but, this time, in delightful lakes, which summon you to their shores, but which you cannot reach. Then, finally, when your foe once more strikes you down, profound prostration, and the giving way of a body which can no longer support you.

Yet this occult power which you carry within yourself does not deprive you of life. The little imperceptible algæ which have succeeded in forcing their way through still more imperceptible pores, appear to stand in special need of heat and water for their existence. Apparently, they ask nothing of you which is indispensable for your own. And so you languish; but you do not die.

Very different, in the violence and terrible rapidity of its effects, is that which, having once entered into your blood, sets it boiling and fermenting, and decomposes it to live on it after its own fashion,—the *fungus*. The latter, designed by Nature to blend with all possible swiftness the immobility of death with the grand current of life in which it may disappear, does not always distinguish rightly, and so sets to work on the living body. It stands in no need of light for its evolutions. It is the offspring of the fog and the dark-

ness. It returns to them willingly, and labours in the hours of gloom.

God preserve from slumber the traveller who, in summer, takes the road of the Maremma, or ventures at night into the Roman Campagna, upon its Pontine marshes. How often he wakens from his fatal sleep to find himself smitten home! The spores, in which the poison too frequently circulates, are not long in germinating in the blood. What are they, in reality? Of an uncertain, half-vegetable, half-animal nature!—Through their substance (they are simply azote, blended or not blended with poisonous gases), through their decompositions, and their rapid transformations, they seem very nearly allied to ourselves.

And what they effect within us, is it not *ourselves?* The algæ, it seems, drink up only the *water* in our blood. The fungus demands its very *principle* and *life*, its red globules.

Sombre is the struggle between that which is, and that which may be. On *your* side, an unequal and powerless struggle, whence spring delirium and redoubled activity on the part of the fire that devours you. But it is all to the advantage of that which has usurped your place; you hasten, you fly, you think to effect your escape. You have but hastened the fatal hour when you will be delivered up to your enemy, bound hand and foot.

When these animated germs filled the air, and such deadly maladies as the typhus depopulated Tuscany, it was called the scourge of God. In those long ages of destruction, when not only conquest, but intestine wars, waged in the most beautiful country of the world —converted it into a desert—these terrible epidemics also descended upon it, and came to coöperate with them. To-day they have lost much of their deadly character. And the centres where they still lurk latent will, let us hope, before long have disappeared. They leave behind them a diminution of strength, of activity, and, let us add, of life.

For is the victim of intermittent fever really alive? Is that double and purely dependent existence, which, at times, over-stimulates the weakest, the interior enemy,—is it life or life's agonizing

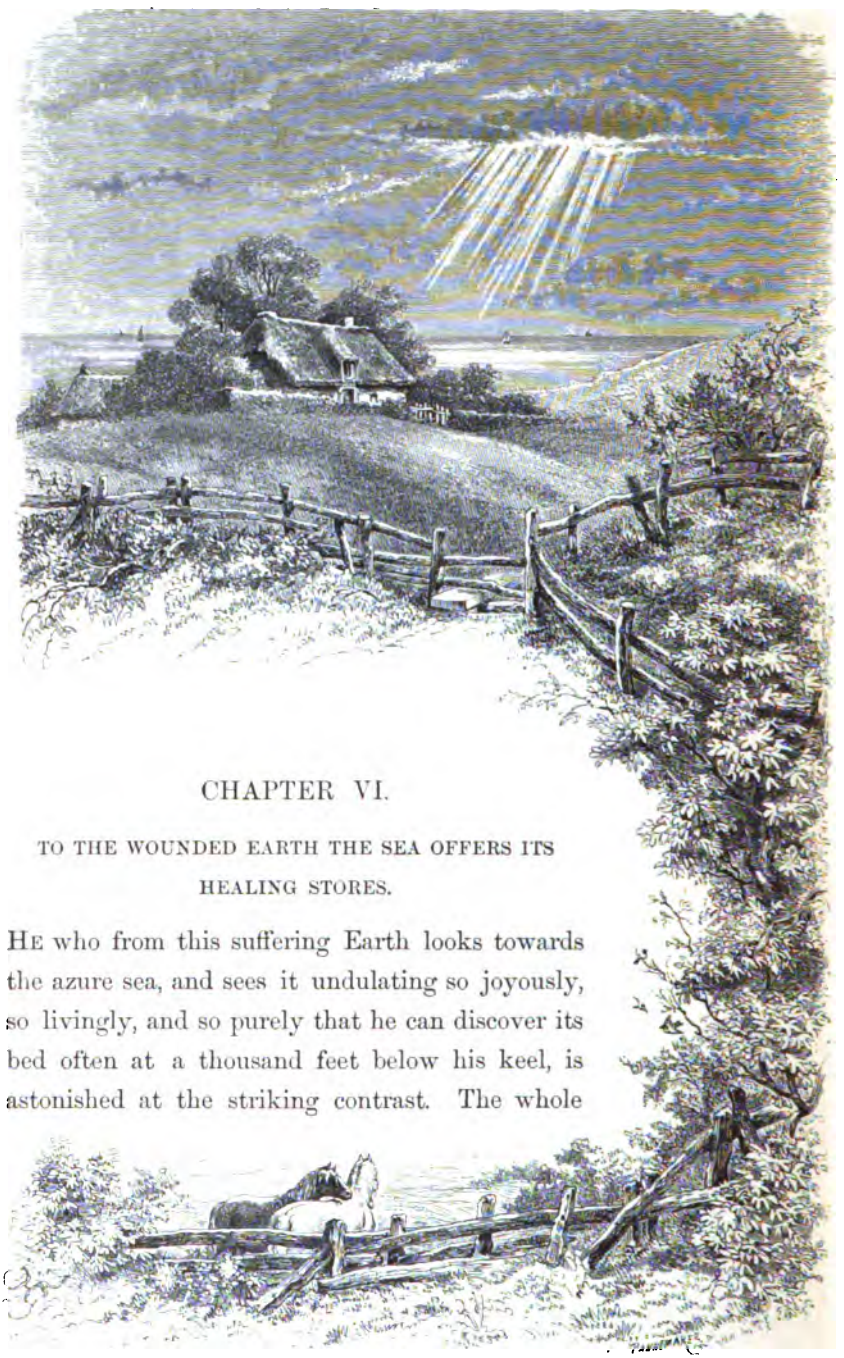
dream? One would say so, to judge from striking symptoms: the leaden complexion,—the sunken eyes which gaze so sadly on you,—the inexpressible languor of every movement. Add, that between each attack a singular condition occurs: light shudderings, then a warm current which makes you sensible of every artery, of every vein. One feels all one's circulation with an infinity of detail. This is not without a certain pleasantness; one knows not clearly whether one would wish to escape from it.

The attraction is fantastic, mysterious, undefinable,—like a snare laid by evil spirits.

The slow exhaustion of the race betrays itself in a strange and

painful manner in the newly-born, who, issuing from the aqueous milk of their mother to drink her aqueous milk, are twice (so to speak) the children of water. The insects are not deceived. In the Maremma of Orbitello, the gnats absolutely disdain to puncture the veins which are not filled with blood. And life no longer seems desirous of establishing itself within. The child is born *old*, and already far on its way towards the tomb. Its youth will know none of the vivid and unanticipated joys which, in a moment, bestow on the soul an eternity. No happiness, and no sadness! "They never laugh," says Fodéri, "beside the cradle of him who has just seen the light; nor do they weep beside the coffin of him who has lost it." After the

numerous variations undergone by him who, from fit to fit, trembles and incessantly totters, the end is only a cure. The extinct existence, so pitifully dragged through, can but gain, in the tranquil immobility of the grave, a complete and secure repose, without any fear of the return of its former agonies.



## CHAPTER VI.

### TO THE WOUNDED EARTH THE SEA OFFERS ITS HEALING STORES.

HE who from this suffering Earth looks towards the azure sea, and sees it undulating so joyously, so livingly, and so purely that he can discover its bed often at a thousand feet below his keel, is astonished at the striking contrast. The whole

expanse stretches afar like a naval festival, of which the islands ranged around are spectators.

The nearest (in defiance of every law of perspective) seem somewhat dark and stern behind their bluish vapours. Others, further off, are hazy. This archipelago, recalling to one's mind that of the Ionian Sea, has much less of its coruscating agitation, of the startling contrasts of its mountains, torrents, capes, and gulfs, so vividly, so brightly marked out against the vigour of an unchangeable ocean.

In front of Tuscany rests a swarm of islands, grouped together like a dependency of the mainland. Nearest to its coast is the rich island of Elba, richer in metallic treasures than almost any island, a prodigious loadstone which seems to attract all the other isles around it. They come to it from all sides. Beyond, lie Corsica and the fertile land of Sardinia.

Tuscany, situated opposite, has not been, and is not, less opulent. Piombino, Castiglione, and Talemone, if they were purified by sanitary measures, would one day become a paradise once more.

No; this country was not predestined to death, nor to be miserably desolated by morbid waters. The rivers do not check their course of their own volition. They flowed formerly to the sea, instead of recoiling backward. This is shown by the fact that districts attacked with the malaria are frequently deficient in spring-water. The clayey soil prevents it from sinking deeply; retains it on the surface, spreads it over the plain in the rays of the sun, in order that it may drink them up and evaporate them. Here the streams and rivers should pass on quickly. The slackening of their waters, the fatal languor of the earth are due to *us*, to the war of Man against Nature. She struggled at first to repair her errors. Feeling and perceiving that formidable emanations arose under the hot sky, she hastened to provide a salutary passage between life and death.

To create these rapid means of safety, it is necessary to disorganize rapidly the great organisms, and from their incalculably numerous atoms to beget the little. And so long as the hot season endures, there should be no rest from labour. A single instant would delay

the current of these alternate existences, would imperil the safety of the world.

But everything changed when the salt waters of the sea, breaking through the barriers erected by Nature, fatally mingled together two hostile and irreconcilable elements. At the inpouring of the briny waters, all the swarming and purifying lives which the *fresh* water had suscitated, were stricken with death, and sank to the bottom. Those which the sea—in this respect no poorer—brought with her, on coming in contact with the fresh water, were likewise poisoned, and so perished. And out of the accumulated mass of refuse and morbid fermentation, this time no regular life again arose. It seemed that over the glaucous waters nothing but death could triumph.

But is it true that the sea herself broke through the barrier, and swept away the dune which she had raised all along the shore, which she had consolidated with her pines and algæ? To him who thus accuses her, she replies: "The guilt lies with thee. If, on the mountain-slopes, thou hadst not felled thy firs, thy ash-trees, and thine oaks; if, on my borders, thou hadst not felled my pine-woods, which I had slowly raised up to preserve thy lands from the force of my tempests and the invasion of my sand-drifts, the toil of the waters had not been interrupted; and to-day everything would not require to be done afresh. How many years it must take! The action of the elements is blind and abrupt. They work by sudden crises. But the resurrection of life demands calm, and gentle continuousness, and prudent arrangement. Assist me; assist Nature. Separate my living waters from the dead waters. Restore to the latter freedom of motion and circulation. Encourage the respiration of earth; lighten the heavy air which weighs upon it, and is deadly to you.

"Restore to the mountain and to my shores the auxiliaries which you have swept away; restore to us our trees. They will become the decoration of your fields, and the safeguard of your salubrity. Give them that beautiful girdle. Plant them around the stagnant waters, and on the embankments which you build up. Do not fear; plant

always,—always. And not your pale olives or light cork-trees, which do their work so slowly; but those heroic trees, with a fresh young foliage which never cries 'Enough'—which drinks with long draughts its life out of death.

"And when you have to deal with a locality which is not earth, but miserable fermented mud, seek with us for plants which do not strike their roots deeply, and which will absorb the deadly emanations. And when a genuine soil has been created, which very soon you will be able to plough, then *sow*. It is, as it always has been, a rich area for labour. Dig but a little deeply, and you will come upon the ancient Etruria, your mother, created entirely for your sustenance. She devised a complete net-work of canals, which, saving us in winter from the inundation of the heavy periodical rains, reserved for our benefit in summer refreshing and fertilizing irrigations.

"You had forgotten the trespasses of your ancestors, and censured Nature. To-day, when our reconciliation is complete, let us work together. Let him who garners be he who sows. Earth only produces liberally when she feels she is loved. In order that she may be thoroughly healed, it is necessary she should return into the paternal hands of the State, which alone can repair so extensive an evil. To effect its cultivation it must be divided, and a portion given to everybody. When he who tills it says to it, 'Thou art mine—thy barley, thy grapes, thy vegetables will be for my family,' she will listen; and thenceforth the victory is won."

Italy must recover her ancient grandeur. Her prophetic genius, who, in the past of Nature saw her future—the analogous return of the same phenomena, but subdued and calculated—now that it is armed with the profound gaze of Science, may, in a very different fashion from the augurs, observe, and foresee, and renew, and renew better than before. Italy is waiting. She is waiting for the assistance of her sons to rise once more in full fidelity to her original

destiny, to become once more the promised land. The agriculture of Etruria asks but to live again.

Once destroyed by the jealousy of Rome, on her ruins springs up the flourishing Tuscany, and Pisa, mistress of the seas. Favoured at first by her very rival, she grew with a marvellous growth; soon she throws her arms around the wide world, and becomes arbiter apparently of the destinies of Italy. She reigns by virtue of her genius; founds schools and universities. She reigns by right. Her jurisconsults thenceforth consolidate society on an indestructible basis. She reigns by her inflexibility. Her mathematician, Fibonaci, prepares the calculations of that starry firmament which Galileo will open up to the eye of man.

But, in the thirteenth century, did she not stray too far from her ancient genius? Was not the horizon which she embraced too extensive? And did she not, in this way, lose her Latin tradition? One would say so, to judge from the evidence presented on every side, in her Byzantine and Moorish monuments. While warring against Mohammedanism, she grew Mohammedan.

She will perish again. She has loved the stranger too enthusiastically, and taken him too freely to her bosom. By embracing a too great diversity of elements, she has fallen weak. At the height of power she borders upon decay. Pisa, in spite of her monuments and her pride, sees herself the sudden captive of the rough Ligurian. On her rock of Meloria, the witness of her conquests, she is loaded with the chains which drag her, shuddering, to exile.

This is, in truth, too much. Mutilated and bleeding, she will essay to rise from the dust, to recover her advantage over her pitiless neighbours. She will struggle for two centuries more, and at intervals will cover herself with glory. Yet Pisa will succumb. Everything is prone to overwhelm her. Her external friends die or betray her. Her enemies alternately sell her. Those whom she enriched by her Oriental commerce, the conquered islands, the Turk, the Greek, the Jew, on seeing her fortune decline, will prudently stand apart. They have carried elsewhere their counting-offices and their treasures. Who, then, will raise her out of her ashes? The Earth? The stranger,

and Iron, and Fire have passed over her so often that she cannot recover. She is sick. Gradually the malaria has taken possession of her. One feels that one is choking. Where, then, shall Pisa find salvation?

She lost the sea; she has lost the earth. What remains to her? The heavens. Galileo comes, and enlarges the world, and penetrates the vault which closed it in, opening up to the wounded soul the Infinite for its consolation.

In this silent—many call it a dead—city, more than one stricken heart regains its confidence, and is strengthened in its hopes of resurrection.

At the hour of nightfall I have wandered down the solitary streets peopled with tombs; seeking to recover my energies, to protect myself against the swooning, the funereal noises and the funereal shadows, which I felt drawing around and threatening to assail me. Following the dumb voice of the beautiful drowsy river, and turning towards the Campo Santo, among the old palaces, and the Byzantine basilicas lighted by the last rays of evening, I have reached the White Tower, young and indestructible, which, like Pisa herself, has leaned towards the earth since the year 1000. I have entered the Campo Santo—at that hour its solitary visitant. I have trodden the stones beneath which lies buried all that in the old time was illustrious. I have not dared to pause; to make the slightest sound, and yet, beneath my footsteps, a subdued whispering has seemed audible.

Reässure thyself, my heart! What you thought dead, and dead for ever, was only sleeping. She has just felt the first trembling movements of the awakening. She possesses prolific ruins, rich in immortality. Yet a little while and Italy, in the force and grandeur of her youthful unity, will start into a new life. "Questa terra pare nata a resuscitar les cose morte."—(*Machiavelli.*)

She will not only return, but return in greater grandeur. Has not God endowed her with everything which could assist her resurrection? Has she not within her own borders a little but perfect world,—that bright and tranquil Tuscany, where we have seen the fire and the water engaging in their ancient struggle? A fertile strife, which made

ready for her, and buried safely underground, her future wealth. Her scarred bosom will heal its wounds over treasures.

But if her ruins are concealed deep in the earth, on the surface, and all around her, lie in profusion the most certain blessings to render her powerful for ever.

A genial soil and a happy climate, which can produce all kinds of vegetation—everything which supplies strength or yields joy. Below, upon the plain, the sea of corn; on the hills, the vine and the olive-tree; that is, the vivid gleam of the cup, and the gentle warmth and soft calm radiance of the fireside. Concentrating in their fruits the potency preserved in her volcanic soil, drinking long draughts of the flashing light of the burning summer-days, they pour out their flood on him who lends them his assistance, at the very hour when he feels overcome by fatigue, and his energies fail him.

The waters also ask that they shall be tended. If the fires are appeased and dissembled, the mineral sources flow. From the flanks of the mountain, and at its feet, they leap forth, heavy with life, loaded with restorative qualities. They offer an infinite variety, saying to him who approaches,—"Drink, and do not fear. We are the resurrection." In the neighbourhood of the sea, the Maremma, in certain places, lingers still. But the antidote is close at hand. Leghorn and Viareggio have been purified, and the invalid can fly to their healthy shores.

All men, all countries, have felt—during the last half-century espe-

cially—the benefit of the Sea. But now the charming idea prevails of conveying the children to it. And, like one in haste, it hurries to

anticipate them, and along the pleasant sands stretches for their behoof its shallow and tranquil tide.

But that life may flower again, the Sea has better resources than her shores; she has her free, unbounded spaces. She throws them open to the poor, little, inoffensive, indifferent invalids, who look upon her disporting in the breeze, and bounding under the winds. And so she attracts and charms the youthful soul, which gradually revives with the joy of action. Why remain motionless, and seated on the shore? Would it not be more delightful to approach the unknown, to feel the canvas swelling, and to thread one's way like the bark, which set out but a few minutes ago, and is already at such a distance? Look at those eyes dilated with fever; with what a sudden lightning they have gleamed! That frank, open look was for Italy a revelation.

Soon, I am persuaded, by the side of her hospitals, she will have training-ships ready to receive her little convalescents.

Many are orphans, and have no mother but their Country. Let her adopt them without delay, and prepare the future for a truly human task.

Italy, like America, is seated between two seas. Owing to her twelve hundred leagues of coast, she is quite as maritime in character as agricultural. Let him, then, who will not cultivate the earth as a labourer, embrace the sea as a mariner. This would be the twofold renovation of Italy. She is summoned to furrow the seas; but not with a warlike yearning, which sooner or later leads to disasters or reprisals. But in the interests of Peace she shall wing her way towards other nations, and join them in the fellowship and interchange of work.

Why does she leave the foreigner to seek her wines, and convey them to London or Calcutta? Or to load his vessels with her rich mineral produce? Let Italy herself export the inexhaustible treasures which she bears in her bosom.

The foremost of these is her *soul*, formerly so inventive, and as fertile now as in the past. The Italian *ingegno* which twice—nay, thrice—has renovated the world, will always respond to him who

questions it. Not to speak of the Arts, whose inspiration is fleeting and uncertain, the resources of the Natural Sciences will enrich it still.

She was sorely discouraged and faint of heart when the Genoese, Columbus, discovered for us a world; when Galileo, pointing out to the navigator his starry guides, replaced Italy, so far as Science was concerned, in the first rank of the nations!

# Illustrative Notes.

## BOOK I.—THE GARDEN.

CHAPTER I.—*The Garden: Introductory.*—In treating of this subject, I have drawn rather from my recollections than from books. The light spade and rake, and the little watering-pot, those good friends of my early days, return of their own accord, as it were, to relate the story of the work we did together with an enthusiasm which was already full of passion. Whatever may be, at a later period of life, the enjoyments of large property given to some individuals, no one will ever feel again those delightful emotions of early ownership. Thoroughly to attach ourselves to any object, it is necessary that to some extent it should be our own. The vivid imagination of childhood converts its little bit of ground into an infinite space; and in its simple confidence sees hidden therein a multitude of treasures.

CHAPTER II.—*The Marble Gardens.*—Before the publication of my book, I revisited Italy, where I met, in all directions, with this preference for architectural gardens at the cost of the natural decoration which vegetation offers. Most of these terraced gardens remind you of Babylon; mounting one above another, beautiful in perspective, but difficult to climb, with their flights of marble steps.

They are not so much agreeable places for walks, as the box-tiers of a theatre thrown open for the pleasure of the eye. Statues represented in the act of movement are also arranged upon the flights of steps, and along the balustrades, like so many spectators contemplating the luminous horizon and the city which spreads at their feet. Florence has her villas planted in stages upon the circle of her hills; all seem to turn themselves towards her, and towards her monuments.

Very different are the enclosed gardens of Asia; the gardens of silence, where the Oriental sits and converses with the sky above his head. But is it truly a conversation, or the dreams of the monastic life, the jealous abiding-places of the man who has nothing else wherewith to secure for himself affection?

In the Moorish gardens there are no statues, no images of active life; but, externally, an abundance of paintings and enamels of flowers. Internally, mosaics,

and colonnades, which all concentrate upon the *patio*, or inner garden, full of odorous flowers and intoxicating perfumes. In the midst a little fountain, rising and falling with monotonous sound, hushes one to sleep.

I know only the villas on the hills of Rome, where Nature seems to have taken a great part in the decoration. But this arises solely from their having been left in a state of decay. The trees, abandoned to themselves, have covered everything with their shadows. It is these which attract you. The statues, mutilated by the vicissitudes of time, no longer engage your attention; the old Fauns, deeply clad with moss, have lost their ironical meanings. In the gloom and shadow, you are truly alone; and all around you spreads the melancholy of things which cannot revive.

CHAPTER III.—*The English Garden.*—This everybody has seen. We have all wandered in its winding alleys, where the plants seem to have been left to form their own associations, to mingle together in a radiant medley, and shut the path against you with their twining sprays. We have seen them all, but we have not known their history, nor learned how Man has succeeded in interpreting and following out the wishes of Nature, instead of mutilating her.

The history of the Garden has been fully told in Monsieur A. Mangin's splendid work, in which the interest of the text is enhanced by a number of frequently admirable illustrations. Side by side with it we may place the instructive little volume of M. André Lefèbvre, which is more modest in its aim, but within the reach of all.

---

## BOOK II.—PASTORAL SCENERY.

CHAPTER I.—*The Meadow.*—I could have written the three following chapters from my own very distinct recollections; but I have also gained what information I could from the agriculturists of the South. It is a truly original thing to look upon each country as upon a human face, a physiognomy quite apart, mild or lively, mobile, and sometimes *spirituel*.

England, which under its mists has assumed an emerald-green attire,—two-thirds of the soil are laid out in meadow-land,—would seem always the same, a little monotonous of mood, if the shifting fogs, and the pale gleams of light, did not relieve it with some half-smiles and uncertain humours. France rather resembles a little garden, which would fain produce everything. One half of its soil is devoted to cereals; but next to the corn-field suddenly succeeds the woody covert, or the vine-clad hillock, broken into a thousand fantastic forms. And Normandy, though scarcely separated from England, with its rich grasses which seem to swallow up the farm, is already different and more positive. The sky has less hesitation in allowing itself to be seen. The phantasmagoria of the mists has to remain on the other shore of the Channel.

As for the South, it is variety itself. One department, for example—that of the Tarn and the Garonne—yields every description of crop. Its opposite exposures, its dry plateau, its low humid lands loaded with alluvial deposits, multiply its riches. Barley, rye, oats, maize, and the like; all the leguminous plants which are included

in man's food supplies; all the fodder for the cattle which nourish them six months in the year. It is fair and fertile, but not romantic. But behind, you have the stony Lot, the Aveyron, with its labyrinth, its caverns, its groves of twisted oaks, its feudal ruins, and its hoarse-complaining torrent. In front, the immense plain traversed by the Garonne, where the golden corn is wreathed with festoons of vines. Like an eldest daughter, Montauban, from its table-land of Quercy, looks towards that infinite which has no other barrier but the Pyrenees.

CHAPTER III.—*Near the Farm:—Apropos of the Redbreast.*—When the peasant is not hostile to the Bird, he is, at least, indifferent to it, and does not care to make it his guest. The happiness is great for that one bird, which finds everywhere his home and asylum without troubling himself about it. *We* are much more meddlesome; we voluntarily represent ourselves as being a kind of providence to them, and, in order to save them, we imprison them. This always turns out ill. In one way or another, these poor captives come to a miserable end.

The death of the robin reminds me of the fate of our nightingale. When he was brought to us, he was already feeble, and incapable of flight; on the other hand, he was also nearly incapable of remaining in a cage. Having been *born in freedom*, he was, therefore, always restless, unhappy, irreconcilable with captivity. In the summer at Fontainebleau, I allowed him the entire range of a little garden, in the hope of beguiling his sorrows. He did not profit by it, but remained for hours seated underneath a gooseberry-bush. But the songs of the warblers troubled him, and I saw that, in spite of the extreme mildness of his eyes, he was gloomy, and wrapped in himself and his regrets. Occasionally, too, towards the close of the summer, I saw him greatly agitated, and constantly looking up on high towards the leafy branches.

One morning, when I had moved to some short distance from him—for, in his turn, he held *me* captive—he escaped, feeling always at his heart that he was one of the winged race. Whither did he go? What was his fate? No one ever ascertained. We felt very strongly the blank left by his absence. He had gained our affections, not only as a nightingale, by his voice, but on his own account, on account of his charming person. We asked each other, What will have become of him, with his nervous temperament, and those wings which can no longer support a sustained flight? How terrified will he be if, at night, and close upon him, he sees the yellow eyes of those horrible cats? And if they have captured him! He will have undergone an agony proportionate to the extreme vivacity of his imaginative faculties; a prolonged agony, perhaps, for duration is relative to the strength of one's impressions, and some minutes are eternities.

We felt ourselves once more famished; we suffered a genuine grief. It is a very serious wrong to imprison a bird *born free*. In one way or another, he dies of his regret, of his efforts to return to that which he has known, has lost, and which makes his very life.

If man will only desist from driving away the frightened birds, and will allow them to warble near his residence, or, sometimes, under his own roof, he will hear them sing with a stronger and more splendid strain, the melody of a free soul.

He will do well, too, to encourage the presence of the tenants of the poultry-yard; there is a kind of humanity, of domestic homely feeling about them. In the hen surrounded by her cackling brood, who does not see a picture of maternal love?

CHAPTER IV.—*The Corn-field—The Storm.*—These excesses (*trombes*) of wind and hail, these cyclones which seem to originate in the strife of the two adverse spirits of the plain and the mountain, are the gloom of our beautiful southern sky.

The clearance of the heights, the aridity of the pebbly hollows, seem to be the attraction of these storms. The Gers, in spite of the beautiful meadows in its damp lowlands, can find no owners. Nearly every year the hail desolates it with its scourge. The bare earth and the stripped declivities are the prey of the wild elements. If there were forests, however, they would act as peacemakers. M. Buguard has very forcibly said: "The trees withdraw the electricity of the clouds, and prevent its disastrous consequences."

---

## BOOK III.—WOODLAND SCENERY.

CHAPTER I.—*The Soil.*—Like the traveller, I have flown across the earth, without power to arrest my flight. I regret it; for I should have dearly loved to linger in such various localities, and to interrogate that common mother which bears us, which feeds us from her rich paps, and concentrates in her productions the power which afterwards brings forth in us the living spark, and some felicitous word or prolific saying on which the world shall live a thousand years.

Plants seek their nourishment in, and derive it from the earth; but she does not

yield herself to them impassively. She also works, and assists them; as you may see in their vigour and healthy air. Without man's help the seeds sow themselves in the most suitable soil; but what would they do if it were not prepared for them in advance,—if the earth from each dry, rugged, and seemingly rebellious substance —as, for example, from the mineral—did not draw the very principle of their life, the solid axis by means of which they elevate themselves, and resist or undulate beneath the wind, or absorb their aërial nourishment?

Man has only to open the furrow, to profit by the grand willingness of earth, by its fertile dialogue with the elements, air, light, dews, rains, winds; the two opposite electricities, which, by their combination, produce thunder; its action upon itself with its own agents, for the purpose of animating and mobilizing its atoms, keeping them in that continual movement of exchanges and transformations which form its internal circulation.

The *Annales des Sciences Naturelles* are full of articles upon this subject. Messrs. Garreau, Baussers, Couvet, Malaguti, Dutrochet, Dehérain, and others, have discussed the "fixed principles" which are found in the ashes of the fireplace; but which, entering in as constituent parts of ourselves, through our vegetable nourishment, assimilate themselves, and not only feed us but give the very elements of our fixity.

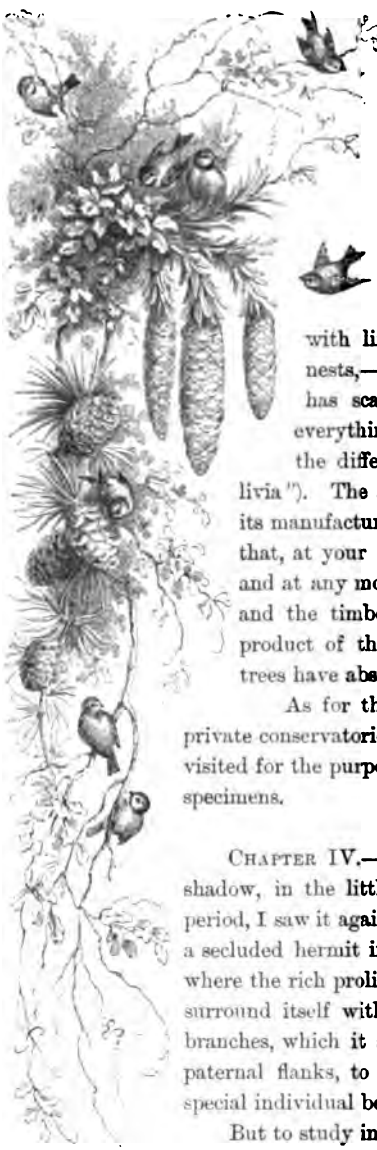
M. Boussingault, in his *Annales*, and those *De Physique et de Chimie*, and in his treatise on Moral Economy, with that lucidity of explanation which characterizes all his works, enriches us with valuable remarks on these subjects. Even if you are not a naturalist, you may read nearly all his books. He invests every page with the luminous simplicity of true science.

The "History of a Grain of Barley" is drawn from Karl Müller's work, "Merveilles du Monde Végétal, Expériences du Prince Sal Horstmar."

CHAPTER II.—*The Epopœas of the Tree.*—For this chapter, which continues our history of the activities of the earth, I have studied, in the first place, the "Fossiles" of M. Brogniart, which show the exterior form of plants in their successive evolutions. Then, taking some fragments of the types which still exist in the southern world, I was able, with the help of the microscope, to follow the progress of their internal organization. It multiplies, in advancing towards our epoch, through the organs of work and the diversities of species.

One sees that, at first, the pith, that milk of the tree, does not radiate from a centre, as if, as yet, it had indulged in no dream of aspiration towards the light, and of following, like our oaks and ash-trees, the rhythm of the year. What they seem most specially to desire, is to take breath, to consume a great quantity of air. This want of aërial life is shown in the numerous tracheæ and vessels of the ferns. The cocoa-palm, which drinks in floods of sunlight, apparently fears it in its turn, and absorbs no vital force. It makes an immense quantity of pith, but acquires no central axis (*Schacht*). Yet it makes a certain progress in the fabrication of its timber. It approximates towards the modern tree, which, finding a richer soil, will strike its roots deeply, and become at one and the same time a son of the Earth and the Light.

CHAPTER III.—*The Virgin Forests.*—These have been so frequently described, that I have felt inclined only to dwell on some peculiarities noted by the most recent travellers. For example, the vast Equatorial forests which one supposed to be resplendent with flowers, are, in reality, dull and unadorned and without fruit, under a sky which can bestow upon them nothing but rain. Heat is not wanting; but it is the luminous and chemical rays, which, by exciting the necessary combinations, invest the plant with its loftiest expression—maternity through the flower and the seed. (See *Radeau*, "*Revue des Deux Mondes.*")



Another curious fact is, that under the virgin forests of Brazil—forests overflowing with life,—with strange birds which build strange nests,—with brilliant and dazzling insects—the soil has scarcely any mould. In an exchange so rapid, everything volatilizes; is seized in the highlands, at the different elevations of the forest (*Beddell*, "Bolivia"). The air is too often deadly, and assists the tree in its manufacture of poisons. It makes them of all kinds; so that, at your pleasure, you may die the death you desire, and at any moment. They are concealed between the bark and the timber; they circulate with the sap, and seem a product of their respiration, the very atmosphere which the trees have absorbed. (*Schacht.*)

As for the *Orchidaceæ*, I have seen—in the public and private conservatories of France and other countries, which I have visited for the purpose of preparing my book—some most singular specimens.

CHAPTER IV.—*The Oak.*—I spent all my childhood under its shadow, in the little woods on my father's estate. At a later period, I saw it again in the forests of Fontainebleau, sometimes as a secluded hermit in sandstone quarries; sometimes in the plain, where the rich prolific soil enables it to live with its congeners, and surround itself with a beautiful family; with strong and noble branches, which it seems to have drawn simultaneously from its paternal flanks, to convert them into its crown, its pride, and special individual beauty.

But to study in it the contradictions and vicissitudes of time, and to hear it relate its own story, you must search out the solitary who has lived a life of centuries, and known throughout its existence both fair and evil days. In its writhing tortured attitudes, it tells you that earth was not always a genial earth. It is robust, nevertheless; and, above all its neighbours,

a true image of strength. But it does not spring aloft; it keeps close to earth. Its branches, instead of rearing themselves on high, hang down below, diffuse, and often fantastic. From their inequality you can easily detect that each child has not received an equal share of attention. The oak is partial to sand and a calcareous clay. At Fontainebleau it has nothing better than sandstone in all its native aridity. Under its rude bark, *Charlemagne* is a barbarous King of the Age of Flint. Were it not that every spring it struggles to spread abroad some additional foliage, you might take it to be but flint; flint which has been transformed into a fantastic image of a tree.

Finally, to study it also in its infancy—in which I had been greatly interested by Schacht—for several successive years I cultivated its acorns, or (may they pardon me the crime!) tore up the young saplings of the forest by their roots. M. Marulay, keeper of the forest of Fontainebleau, willingly assisted me with his valuable information. Through the labours of Malaguti and Dutrochet (see *Annales des Sciences*, ix.), I have grown acquainted with the partialities of the oak for those substances which supply its mineral nourishment. With M. Boussingault, I have traced the wanderings of the *tiny soul*, of that animated substance, that leaven or yeast called *azote*, which does not consolidate itself, like the minerals, and does not mingle with other principles; which one finds always apart and in complete entirety; which is incessantly in movement in the younger actions, where life displays the greatest activity; in the flower, in the seed (in reserve); while it gradually withdraws from the parts which have reached maturity.

CHAPTERS V. and VI.—*Our Ancient Forests.—Legends of the Woods.*—Everybody knows that the forests formed the first encampments, forts, and citadels of humanity. Down to the fifteenth century one sees this fact in the *marks* (or *marches*), hidden and disguised, which stretch from one country to another. They were man's dwelling-place and refuge. How often has the proscribed owed to them his life!

For the popular belief in the mysterious tenants of the woods, I have gone to the very fountain in the "Mythology" of Grimm, which is specially occupied with the Scandinavian and Germanic deities,—deities born of the hurricane,—gods of the air rather,—but who afterwards took refuge under the canopy of the woods. M. A. Maury, in his book on "The Forests," has supplied me with the genial sylvan gods of Greece and Gaul; the fauns of the Apennines; and next, familiar demons, goblins, will-o'-the-wisps, trolls, kobolds, and many others. The smallest lie hidden under the bark. Remove it, and they follow you! They gather in the cottage, concealing themselves in its corners, behind the great chest, close to the fire—anywhere, everywhere—in the little hole of the cricket, or disporting in the flame.

With Schure, in his "Lied Allemand," I have encountered the elves and nixes who have not followed man into his dwelling-place, but have taken refuge in the air—consigned themselves to the wind—or descended to the bottom of the waters. In this beautiful book, which ought to be carefully studied, throbs the emotion—blending with the wholesome criticism of a mind of the nineteenth century—the emotion, I say, of a soul profoundly in love with Nature, with the simple credulities of another age.

CHAPTER VII.—*The Kingdom of the Wolf.*—In M. A. Maury's book, already cited, we are able to trace the decadence of the earliest inhabitants of the forest. They were very numerous in the time of Julius Cæsar; but speedily recoiled before the advance of man, and disappeared. Yet, as late as the thirteenth century, the auroch was living in Bohemia and Lithuania. In the fourteenth, says Fitzstephen, they abounded in the immense forests of Middlesex. But, as a rule, they retired in the early centuries of our era.

The wolf alone, conscious of his mission, came to a different decision, and refused to quit his asylum. However, he did not keep sufficiently to his peculiar domain; he advanced too far beyond the forest boundaries. Under Charlemagne, man was engaged in putting down his licenses, and in besieging him in due form. In the reign of Charles IX., which marks a disastrous epoch both for men and beasts, he had his own special hunting-manual. But in each period of war, when man forgot the pursuit of the wolf in the pursuit of his kind, the wolf hastened to regain his former position and to multiply his kind—the she-wolf carrying nine cubs at a birth. He returned in legions. The Revolution of '89, which swept away the grand seigneurs, the patrons of the chase, proved most auspicious for him. If the sway of the kings was ended, that of the wolves began. Du Halley slew one thousand as his share!

The Baron de Couteulx de Cantelier ("La Chasse au Loup," quarto, 1861) gives the most amusing details in reference to the stratagems and jovialities of Messire Toanquin. In the treatise on "Chasses à Courre et à Tir," by Messieurs Chaillon, De la Rue, and Lage, we find, in conjunction with a historical narrative of the Chase, many curious facts throwing light on this curious animal. I need not speak of Buffon, who is in everybody's hands, but who knew him only in his period of decline.

CHAPTER VIII.—*Under the Forest-Trees.*—The mute language of the trunk of the oaks is not an empty vision. Has not the forest emancipated the mind? The Kelts found in it their magic alphabet, *the runes*. A clear and thoughtful dreamer, Laurent Koster, in a colourless forest of Holland, saw the wrinkled bark of the oaks detach itself in movable letters, and yearn to speak. (*Michelet*, "Origines du Droit Français.")

The painful sensation which we experience in the forest after a succession of burning days is due to the radiation from the trunks of the trees. They are living beings; they transpire as we do. At night they yield a portion of their heat to the air, which seeks to preserve its equilibrium. It seems, then, that the lower part of the wood grows warm instead of growing cold. Humboldt and Bonpland, in the plains of Venezuela and the Lower Orinoco, found that this escape of caloric from the plants made a difference of from seven to eight degrees between the soil and a stratum of air a few yards above it.

CHAPTER IX.—*The Fall of the Leaves.*—For this chapter I have read much and worked arduously; have studied the leaf through the microscope—that admirable apparatus, which, with the assistance of the light, inspires with life objects which seemed dead or inert,—the *inorganic*. What more can the animal which believes in

his superiority do, than consume the substance prepared for him by the plant? The leaf, so great is its power, though that power is hidden, accomplishes what chemistry cannot. Coldly, and without any other means than its limb directed towards the sunlight, it decomposes the carbonic acid which our breathing throws off upon the air. It returns to us the *oxygen*, and for itself retains what for us would be a poison, the *carbon*.

It is only the green colour which reäcts in this way. Under the prism, a ray so precise is necessary, and no other, to enter into activity. (*Draper*, "Experiments on the Sensation of Leaves, under the Different Colours of the Prism.") Yellow and orange alone make an impression upon them. The most luminous, and not the warmest rays, favour the chemical action of the green matter.

Messrs. Boussingault and Correnwinder ("Assimilation of Carbon by Vegetables," in the *Annales de Chimie et de Physique*, 1858) have introduced into their article a series of experiments of the highest interest on the action of the leaf. According to the species of the plant, it seeks the direct, or is contented with the diffused rays of the sun. Great is the benefit of this inequality of wants and necessities. In misty and shrouded weather, it ensures continuity in the exchange of the principles of the atmosphere; a condition essential to its salubrity, and its vital composition.

But the sap holds suspended some elements of a comparative coarseness. These elements pass and repass and arrest their course, and crystallize in the subtly thin arteries and veins of the leaf. They obstruct them. One can foresee the failing of the delicate organ, and its premature end. (See Garreau and the other authors named for the "fixed principles," as well as Schacht's "L'Arbre." I have also derived great assistance from the "Physiologie Végétale" of Julius Sachs, and from the work of Duchartre, and from M. Radeau's articles, "Light," and "Climate" —I quote from memory—in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.)

M. Edouard Morren, who so worthily supports the glorious name of his father, has published a series of works on the "Colouring of Plants," in regard to its close connection with the decomposition of light. It is impossible to imagine anything more interesting, or more clearly showing a very extensive erudition, united with curious, original, and personal views, expounded in admirable language.

M. Boussingault, in his Treatise on "Rural Economy," describes the *last* moments of the leaf's existence. The mists and superabundant dews of autumn suppress its transpiration, bring on disease, and induce death.

In spite of the instinctive movement of the pores, which involuntarily close in order to shut out the mephitic gases or excessive moisture (*Brogniart*, "Structure des Feuilles," *Annales des Sciences*, tome xx.), it is fain to succumb. Hugo von Mohl (in his book, "Chute des Feuilles") relates how it isolates itself from the mass by a partition of cork, which prevents anything reaching it except the juices of the trees, and further prevents moisture from entering through the little wound it sustains in falling.

CHAPTER X.—*The Winter.*—One evening, when we were sharing the corner of our fireside with our great chemist, Berthelot, and were admiring together those tiny

jets of flame which alternately kindle and die away among the embers, it occurred to me to recognize in their colour the principal element which supplies the sustenance of the tree. The blue flame more particularly betrays its aërial nourishment (oxide of carbon); rose, the potash which we discover in the cinders, and for the sake of which we destroy so many forests; yellow, the soda; reddish yellow, the lime.

Respecting the difference in value of the rays in autumn and spring, I have allowed a greater range to that which Radeau affirms of their different value at night and morning, and I have applied it to the seasons. It is certain that, in autumn, the air is charged with floating organic dust, or inorganic, which the light and life of summer have stirred into great activity. These bodies, floating on the vapours, retain in themselves a portion of the solar rays. In spring, on the other hand, the cold airs and frequent rains of winter have dragged these corpuscules towards the earth, and supplied them with nourishment from the falling stars. (The stars yield that nitric acid of which the plants are so greedy.) The upper air being thus cleansed and purified, the sun's rays acquire, notwithstanding that their obliquity is equal to what it was in autumn, a very high chemical value, being precisely the condition needed to arouse the plant from its long sleep.

For the *mal de la neige*, which physicists assert to proceed from the subtraction of the electricity in the air,—an electricity necessary for ourselves,—nothing can be more natural. But how are we to explain the fact that we are warned of it at a distance? For instance, I have always known at Hyères when it was snowing at Lyons, a few hours after the snow had begun to fall.*

CHAPTER XI.—*Disappearance of the Forests.*—My attention has, for a long time, been drawn to this most urgent subject.

It has been my design to show, in the first place, the weakness of man, and his dependence on the tree, owing to his enormous consumption of wood in his furnaces and industries.

M. A. Maury follows, step by step, from century to century, the destructive scourge which fells our forests in Central France. Ramond and Dralet point it out in the Pyrenees. Isabeau (in his "Forêts du Globe") dwells upon the aggregate. Clavé, in a similar review, sketches the clearance of the Corsican forests, the ruin of an island which counts among the richest in the world.

In a valuable memoir ("Destruction des Forêts," 1859), M. Becquerel shows that the total superficial area of our forests is now reduced to eight million hectares. Under the Empire, it was legal to fell thirty-one thousand hectares yearly, which, in a century only, would have reduced our woods by eight to nine millions of hectares, or nearly one-half.

According to another and very exact calculation, which I find in the "Annales Forestières," we expend on an average forty-eight million *steres* yearly, and produce only thirty millions. In 1853, we imported sixty-two millions of common timber. It is said that replanting goes on. Yes; to the extent of ten thousand hectares per annum,

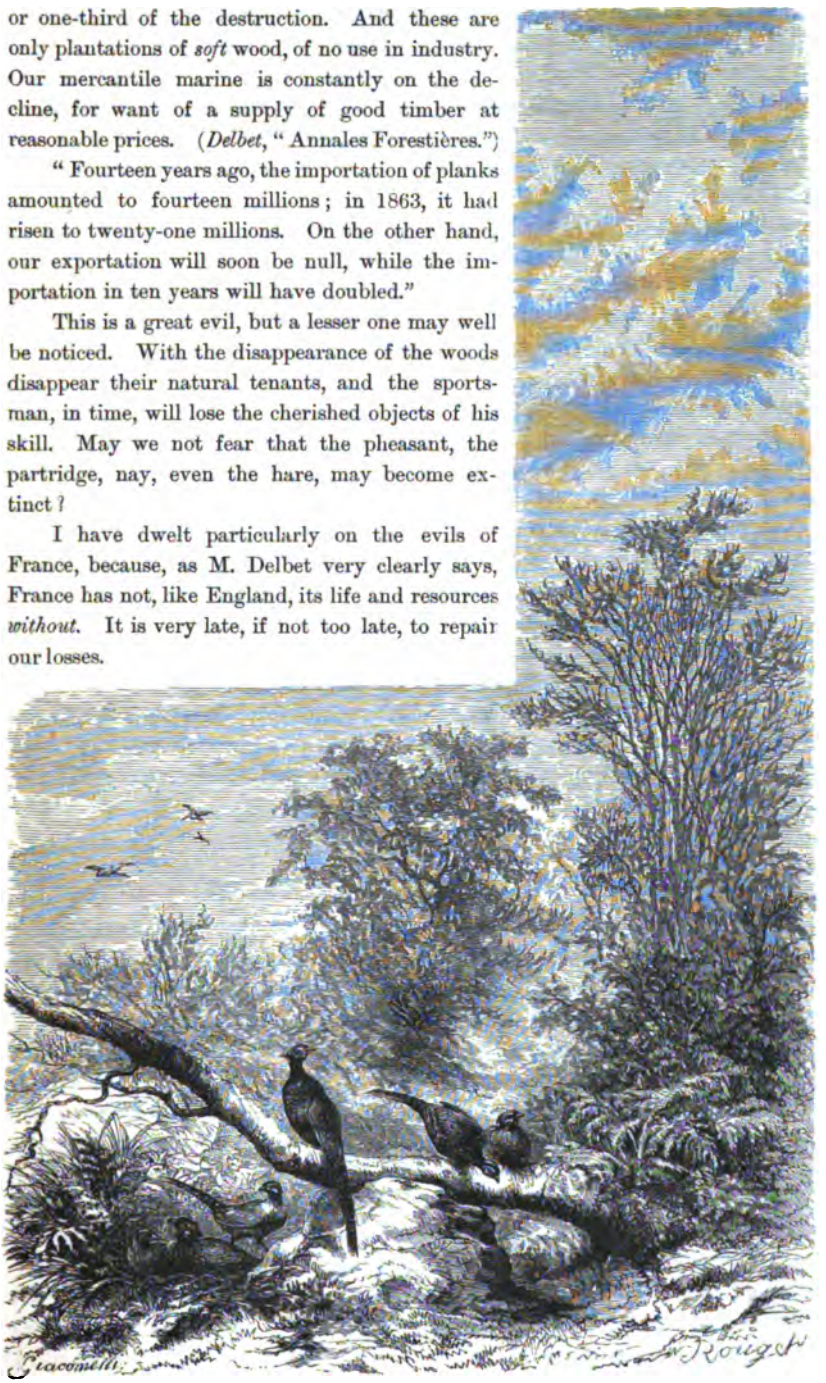
* Resembling, one might say, the rapid and almost instantaneous sensation of the magnetic needle, which indicates, at the very moment they occur, any disturbances in the circulation of the magnetic fluids.

or one-third of the destruction. And these are only plantations of *soft* wood, of no use in industry. Our mercantile marine is constantly on the decline, for want of a supply of good timber at reasonable prices. (*Delbet*, "Annales Forestières.")

"Fourteen years ago, the importation of planks amounted to fourteen millions; in 1863, it had risen to twenty-one millions. On the other hand, our exportation will soon be null, while the importation in ten years will have doubled."

This is a great evil, but a lesser one may well be noticed. With the disappearance of the woods disappear their natural tenants, and the sportsman, in time, will lose the cherished objects of his skill. May we not fear that the pheasant, the partridge, nay, even the hare, may become extinct?

I have dwelt particularly on the evils of France, because, as M. Delbet very clearly says, France has not, like England, its life and resources *without*. It is very late, if not too late, to repair our losses.



I ought here to thank M. Barnal, the eminent editor of the journal, *L'Agriculture*, who has kindly directed me in my researches.

CHAPTERS XII. AND XIII.—*The Hallali.*—I have but to name my authorities; to quote the old writers, Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Pliny, who wondered at the beautiful animal, and believed that the ivy rose and entwined itself among his superb antlers.

All is not deception here. The antler of the stag, like the timber of the tree, grows from the summit, while it hardens at the base. And, like it, it is light and porous in damp countries; short, compact, and heavy in dry countries. It is almost allowable to say that, to disguise its immobility, it detaches itself from the earth, and plants itself on the noble forehead of the stag, who carries it to and fro in a slow and royal gravity.

And nowadays that we have ceased to wonder, we ought, at least, to recognize that the buds, the young leaves, the rich saps of spring imbibed underneath the bark, powerfully contribute to the growth of that wood with which the ancients deceived themselves.

The Sire du Fouilloux, a Poitou noble, born at the happy epoch of 1521, in the treatise which he presented to Charles IX., induces us to pardon his science (too much the result of mere practice) for the sake of his simple, amusing, and sometimes candid narratives. One feels that the huntsman is not thoroughly hardened, that he is not always bent upon slaughter, but that he has frequently conversed with some noble full-grown stag, and gained a lesson from his experiences.

Messieurs Lage and De Chaillon, in their work already cited, treat the subject like men of consummate practical knowledge; but they show no sympathy with the stag's tears. I am indebted to them for the graceful story of the roebuck.

---

## BOOK IV.—MOUNTAIN SCENERY.

CHAPTER I.—*Vision of the Mountain.*—She who knows how to read the Ramay-'ana, like Sita, will see before her that sublime vision of the Himalaya. She will encounter it at every step in the divine landscapes pointed out to her by Rama, the revelation of that Indian world which is all light and sweetness.

The poems of modern science are not less attractive. The brothers Schlaginweit, who accomplished in their ascents an altitude of 23,000 feet; Hodgson, who has seen the great Sacred River issuing from its mysterious grotto, protected from the profane by cliffs of ice, a rampart four hundred feet in height;—have not *they*, too, become sensible of the Spirit which broods over these lofty regions?

Lejean, so prematurely snatched away from the ranks of Science, and whose loss cannot be repaired, has introduced us to the paradise of Cashmere.

Mr. Warrens (in his "British India") conducts us to the cradle of Sita,—the ruined city of Narsinga, embosomed in ancient forests. I recommend to every reader his highly interesting work.

CHAPTER II.—*The Mission of the Mountain.*—It is only necessary to look at a map of the world to see how our planet has distributed its land, covering more particularly with water its Torrid Zone. Were it not for those seas, the *Cloud-Ring*, that canopy of clouds which refreshes us with the assistance of the winds, could not have been created, and the world had never lived. I have nowhere observed that the geographers have remarked this indispensable distribution of the masses of the land.

Lyell has assisted me in following up the slow, harmonious revolutions of the globe. Maury, to whom in the study of Physical Geography it is also necessary to have recourse, has furnished me with the law of the double aërial and maritime currents. As for the mission of the Mountain, it is visible to all who have traversed it, who have lived in the face of its glaciers, and on the border of its lakes.

Humboldt, in his "Kosmos," shows us how the young earth rose from chaos without any violent efforts. How, at a later date, she has organized over all her surface the intercrossing system of her mountain-chains,—whether to retain the rains, and convert them into snow, or whether to raise a barrier against the cold winds of the North, and the sharp dry winds of the East,—to create the sheltered basins in which humanity would afterwards find its cradle. The example is impressive on the Cordilleras, whose transversal chains have provided man with the means of living at the elevation of Mont Blanc.

CHAPTER III.—*The Dragon of Fire.—The Andes.*—Humboldt, in this Chapter, has been our master and our guide. His articles on the Volcanoes of Quito, his descriptions of the lofty summits of the Andes, and his papers upon *Geology and General Physics*, in which he describes his ascents of Chimborazo and Pichincha. His labours of measurement on the elevation of the continents are a perfect mine of wealth. I have also read M. Boussingault's ascents. M. Reclus, in his book "La Terre et la Mer," has also profited by these works to compile his admirable description of the Andes.

CHAPTER IV.—*The Sadness of the Lofty Deserts.*—Consult for those of Arabia, De Bride; those of Persia, Cloquet; of Central Asia, Humboldt; and, after him, a host of other writers. Atkinson has traversed the entire Mongolian Desert; Vambéry, Turkistan and Bokhara. In America, a legion of travellers has brought us acquainted with the diversified aspect of its elevated deserts. That of Peru is a waste of barren sand, which produces not even a blade of barley, and where thunder has never been heard (*Ulloa*). That of Mexico, bristling with cacti, has been portrayed by Humboldt and Karl Müller. That of Utah, covered with salt, by Rémy; but *here*, silence does not reign. Bands of wolves howl throughout the night, and endeavour to imitate the human voice. The gray bear prolongs its growl. The snakes agitate their rattles, and slide under your wrappers in search of warmth. The scorpions vibrate their claws. Into the rivers which, as yet, have been unable to conquer the barrenness of this bitter soil, buffaloes, as they pass on their way at night, plunge rejoicingly, and buffet their waters to and fro. Immense flights of birds, which choose the hours of darkness for their aërial jour-

neys, stir the air with many a swirl and eddy, so that you feel it passing over you in waves and billows. They come,—some in silence, others screaming,—all of them fearing the unwieldy beasts which, in the evening and the morning, in the dubious twilight, weep for their victims, and summon them to return.

CHAPTER VI.—*Near and Afar.—Mountain-Echoes.*—M. de Saussure, who was the first to attempt Mont Blanc, narrates a dream which he found cherished by the mountaineer. To discover an everlasting cavern of crystal, by the side of that melting crystal, the glacier. The dream of such an enchanted grotto seized at first on the imagination of man; he faced the most frightful dangers in the hope of realizing it. On his way, he met with the animal which for so many centuries had been the lord of the mountain. He was overpowered by the temptation of pursuing it. And for its sole vengeance, behold the chamois pointed out to him the path, the only practicable route by which the summit could be reached (*Tyndall*). From that day, the difficulty previously regarded as insurmountable was conquered. The fascination changed its character. What the guide, following in the track of the man of science, now seeks to surprise, is, *the theory of the glacier*. But he is in no wise prepared for the task, he has studied nothing. Over him who would penetrate its secret the glacier casts its spell. Several guides on the Bernina have thus gone mad. (Such is the assertion of Coloni, *doyen* of the association.)

"The superstitious inhabitant of the Valais." This vestibule of Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn, and of so many other sublime peaks, long remained apart from the world, and unknown. In the hamlet Des Jours a young girl swooned at the sight of De Saussure. She thought the rest of the earth uninhabited. "Can it be possible that there is no mountain in your village?"

One is not surprised that in this isolation, this grand silence, to escape from the enchantment which the solitude throws over him, the shepherd—the majority were, of old, looked upon as sorcerers—has conceived the idea of making the mountain speak. The charm then, perhaps, would be broken. Who knows, too, what it might not answer?

CHAPTER VII.—*The Ruins.*—These are scattered far and wide over the world; but those which Nature sculptures, so to speak, in its slow metamorphoses, possess a singular majesty of character. They seem to us always alive.

Neither Humboldt nor Atkinson has given any drawings of their cities of granite. But we can see in the *Tour du Monde* those of Nebraska, according to sketches made at different dates by Messieurs Girardin and Simonin. The latter, who has traversed in every direction the desert of the Far West, has also made an admirable collection of portraits of the races now fast perishing—the Red Skins. These will be of inestimable value when the last tribe shall have died out.

David Dale Owen, who explored the magical city into which one descends as into the circles of Dante's "Inferno," and detected the species of the fossils which people it with their bones, looks upon the immense valley as the result of a colossal vertical dyke, modified, in the course of time, by the usual destructive agencies.

We are all acquainted with Professor Tyndall's intrepid ascent (we French through Dr. Louis Lortet's translation). With this I have been fain to finish, because I recognize in it the voice of Hope. Throughout his book, the great English naturalist has scattered words which comfort, and speak of immortality.

CHAPTER VIII.—*The Medicinal Influence of the Upper Valleys.*—After a second perusal, how unsatisfactory this chapter seems to me; I feel as if I could have done better had I written it to-day.

To those who wish for further information, I recommend M. Radeau's article (in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*), in which he has brought forward with much clearness the advantages of the mountain-air.

Professor Tyndall very justly remarks that human activity is possible only within a narrow zone of temperature. The two extremes unite to preserve the equilibrium of our functions. To rehabilitate the invalid stricken down by disease, we must select one among the different stations on the mountain-side. The average for human creatures is 3000 feet (*Charles Martins*, who speaks from experience).

But this does not suffice. My favourite locality is one where the difference of temperature between day and night is not too sensible. For this reason I have spoken of Engelberg, where the Fœhn (or Fön) alone penetrates, and is never violent. It unbinds, without enfeebling. I might note also the station where I write these lines (Glyon), which lies sheltered in a perfect basin of verdure, without any naked declivity abruptly disturbing the free circulation of the air.

I am aware that vigorous organizations, rich in blood, would find it too calm and mild. It does not receive the great current of the summits, the keen air of the health-resorts which lie above snows and glaciers. But those who feel depressed, (and who is not at this epoch?) those who have suffered, and allowed the nervous life to predominate in their system, would here be soothed and tranquillized, and would gradually recover the harmony of their forces. And is it, in reality, so very advantageous to feel that raw air, raw and deficient in vitality, which, night and evening, descends from the huge masses of the snows?

We know that it is not with impunity we confront in our mountain-ascents the declivities which they cover.

Dr. L. Lortet, whom I have already named, has published an admirable essay on the *Mal de Montagne*. Should we not rather call it *Mal de Neige?* The physiological disturbances which we experience are, indeed, less painful if we climb the steep. Boussingault always found this to be the case in his ascents of the Cordillera. It would appear, he says, to be independent of the rarefaction of the atmosphere. One observes, particularly when abundant snows clothe the mountains, that the weather is calm when the snow is "smitten by the sun."

M. de Saussure, who suffered least when the *bise* blew, was of opinion that the air above the snow possessed only less oxygen.

Dr. Lortet appears to attribute the disease to the excessive outlay of strength which the respiratory combustion does not sufficiently repair, on account of the rarefaction of the atmosphere. The play of respiration being also more rapid, "the breath has not the time to oxygenate itself suitably in the pulmonary

vesicles. The normal composition of the blood is modified by the saturation of carbonic acid."

Will the doctor permit me to add that to this poisoning by default of elimination of a hurtful gas, we ought, undoubtedly, to join the effect of the chemical action produced by the intensity of the light—so powerful at great elevations, where the rarefaction of the air suffers everything to pass, *chemical rays*, *luminous rays*, *caloric rays*? The snow performing here the function of the earth, *absorbs*, but afterwards very rapidly reäcts, having no occasion, like the soil, to utilize this absorption to the profit of the plants.

However this may be, the valleys exposed to the direct current of the winds which sweep over broad fields of snow are not *equilibrized* stations, nor should we recommend them.

I earnestly desire the appearance of a work, more complete than that of Dr. Lombard, which shall teach suffering and enfeebled humanity how to profit more thoroughly by the mountain-air.

CHAPTER IX.—*The Tenants of the Mountain.*—Birds, says Tschudi, are tied to the localities which feed them. The devastation of the forests has deprived them of the greater portion of their demesnes. In the Engadine, within the memory of man, many have been known to take their leave, never more to return, which, nevertheless, had made there their nest.

The same author has dwelt upon the disappearance of the wild goat. You can read in the book of Colonel Mechtels (the "Chamois-Hunter"), how greedily it has been pursued by man, who often kills for the mere sake of killing. The poor creature, not hit perhaps, rolls over the precipice. There are episodes in the work I speak of to make one shudder.

Messieurs Boussingault, Charles Martins, Planchon Barral, and many other physiologists, have busied themselves with the study of the reäctions produced by the phenomena of heat, light, and electricity on the Alpine plants. I shall acknowledge elsewhere, in a book which I am preparing on the Plant, how much I am indebted to each of these *savants*.

The simple and pathetic little history of the *Stallmoenchen* I have taken from Grimm's Collection of Tales. I have not the book beside me, to quote the author's name.

CHAPTER X.—*The Highlands.*—In this chapter, and in that on the Scottish Lakes, I have accomplished a great work, surrounding myself with all I could collect in natural history. The best maps, topographical charts of mountains, statistics of climate: on the other hand, the songs and ancient ballads which, often more than history itself, reveal the genius of a race.

Even if Macpherson's "Ossian" be modern, it does not the less reflect the very constant and yet changeful physiognomy of a land where mists and winds are incessantly battling.

The poems and novels of Sir Walter Scott—his "Lady of the Lake," his "Waverley," his "Bride of Lammermoor"—supply us as fully as the most precise

geographer and historian with details of scenery, and with the traditions which form the inheritance of ancient families;—legends, visions, apparitions, all born, apparently, of the world of vapours, of the shifting phantasmagoria which animates this steadfast world of granite. Modern travellers, however lightly they may regard the fictitious, have not the less succumbed to the powerful impression of the mirage of the mists.

Faujas de Saint Fond, to whom we owe a "Voyage to the Hebrides," was fairly ensnared by the indescribable tempests which rage in their narrow straits. His servant—by no means a man of imaginative mood—in a brief voyage saw such a legion of forms in the scurrying clouds, and heard beneath the waves so many singular sounds, that he could not be persuaded to recross the stormy fiords.

Upon land, the scene of the desolate moors with their changing mists seems to the author a world of spirits. No wonder that the Scotch imagination sees in them a hundred improbabilities. Marcey (in his "Scotia") is spell-bound also; he understands that this people still preserve their ancient faculty of "second-sight." In the mountains, the Highlander secretly retains his reverence for the spirits which still wander among them, and which he must thank or beguile. Brownie, everybody's helper, always finds his cake left among the embers; and the fishermen still offer up a prayer to the kelpie.

Upon the sleeping waters which, in a warmer country, would awaken all the dangers of the Maremma, may not it be a feverish kind of dream which still summons from the depths the "White Lady"?

M. Amadée Pichot, to whom the public is indebted for the valuable collection of the *Revue Britannique*, has published likewise a beautiful and picturesque volume on "Scotland," at an epoch in which it was known almost only through Walter Scott, but when the traveller yearned to see the places which that great romancist had immortalized. Messieurs Joanne and Esquiros, in their turn, have given us Scotland as it is. They have traversed it like true tourists—on foot, and with haversack on back.

M. L. de Lavergne has visited it as an agriculturist, and his book shows the poor Scotland of olden days now famous as a producing country, and cultivated upon the most approved agricultural systems. The Scotchman is solid in his knowledge. He digs to the very bottom. And it is to this he owes his constantly increasing wealth. The indifferent soil of the Borders will ere long be converted into fertile ground.

The Highlands alone seem dedicated to solitude. All their population, who have not emigrated, have either betaken themselves, or been driven back, to the Lowlands or the sea-shore. In the mountains, which are divided among two or three great proprietors, a single shepherd suffices for five hundred head of cattle. (*Lavergne.*)—Lost among the heather, who knows that he exists?

And yet it is in these solitudes that the spirit of *clanship* survives. The word *clan* in the Gaelic tongue signifies *children*. A Scotch lady, from the Highlands, once said to me, "Even at the present day, the same name makes us all cousins." It is there, too, that woman has found her best position, and especially the maiden, who frequently became the inspired bard.

From Scotland we obtain a charming article, not less poetical than its songs — namely, its gauze, its *baptiste*, woven with a finer and silkier thread than a woman's hair. It is less known that it was Scotland which conferred upon human activity its wings, the wings of—*Steam*. Patrick Miller, in 1766, made the discovery.* He introduced his steam-boiler into the first ship which steamed upon the Clyde. Fulton saw the apparatus, and completed it in America. —(*Marcey.*)

I have not yet named John Sinclair, the author of "Memoirs of a Naturalist" and "Excursions in Sutherland." I owe to him my picture of the sea in July. I have also been indebted to his works in my chapters on "The Scottish Lakes" and "the Swan." He is the Audubon of Europe.

---

## BOOK V.—RIVER SCENERY.

CHAPTERS I. AND II.—*The Torrent.*—I have attempted to make of each Book a complete whole, and a miniature "Genesis" of each of the grand manifestations of nature. Here, I have begun my study of the waters from their starting-point in the glacier, and following up their varied currents, have conducted them to the sea, which finishes my work in the Seventh Book.

My reader will have pardoned me for having repeated, under another form, in this chapter, some matters which will seem to have been discussed already in my chapter on "the Ruins." This has been done intentionally. My remarks on the clearance of the mountain could not return too often. Man destroys his natural climate, and affects its salubrity; after awhile, he himself will change, and lose the genius of his race. On this subject I have learned much from our travels. Let those who are interested in the fate of the earth read M. Surrel's work, "Les Torrens des Hautes Alpes;" also the pamphlet by M. Blanqui, the agriculturalist. Tschudi has devoted to it one of his finest pages. We may see that the torrent, through man's default, has become a worker of death.

But observe how, by its patient, I had almost said heroic labour, it has pierced through the mountain, and opened up a path for man. All its channels, at a later epoch, have been adopted by humanity. Frequently they are used even by our railways, which find they can do no better.

By the side of our French Alps, devastated by modern torrents, I have set the work of a torrent in the olden time. M. Joanne, who is so thoroughly well acquainted with France, has given in the *Tour du Monde* a very excellent monograph on that intrepid stern combatant of Dauphiné. With regret, I have been forced to abridge it.

As for the Aveyron: it is *my torrent*. I have lived in its neighbourhood, I have known it in its gentle moods and in its outbursts of Southern passion. Has it not moulded me, at length, somewhat in its own likeness? A little wild, but of a firm will? However, in my description I have barely done it justice. See it in autumn, and without too long a delay, for our beautiful ruins are disappearing.

* [The reader must not put implicit faith in Madame Michelet's scientific generalizations.]

Take with you a good guide-book, such as "Les Merveilles du Grand Central," by Leblanc du Vernet.

CHAPTER III.—*Metamorphoses of the Water.*—It is at the very moment when the torrent escapes from the "sea of ice" to traverse the mountain that one can follow it in the rapid changes which give so much life to earth, and awaken in it a great confused speech—confused at first, but growing soon, in the river, into a distinct voice and assuming a regular rhythm. I give here the results of my own observation; what I have seen, what I have noted in my dialogues with the water. Has it well inspired me?

My remarks on the wing and the flower belong to palæontology. The same lighter but less humid air which supports the wing of the insect and the bird, enables the flower to dispense with the concealment of her dream of maternity under her leaf (*i.e.*, in the spore). She expands to the utmost in the sun's gaze, becomes verily a flower, and freer and yet freer in her aspiration.

CHAPTERS IV. AND V.—*The Loire and the Mississippi.*—The metamorphoses of water have carried us down from the brook to the stream, and from the stream to the river. Could I do better than take as the type of these great arteries, which are the life of the world, the one which does not vary, which is always the same from its source to its mouth? This, certainly, is no commonplace example.

For its earlier stages, when it escapes from its lakes, I have taken as my guides the "New Geographical Dictionary," edited by M. Joanne, and M. Lanoye's "Voyage," published in the *Tour du Monde.*

From Orléans to Nantes we have all descended it, visiting on its banks the castles of the Valois princes.

The Mississippi—before all and above all, the great river-toiler, in opposition to the Loire, which creeps slowly to the ocean—is the most active of rivers at its embouchure, and I have therefore selected it as my type of the delta-constructors. The discoverers who have written respecting it (the comrades of the Cavalier de Lassalle); and Charlevoix, who lived some thirty years later, marvelled at the *débris* it carried along with it for its building purposes. The engineer Thomassy, who has studied it in our own times ("Géologie Pratique de la Louisiane"), affirms that it has no longer its timber rafts to assist it. The narrative of this *savant* is full of interest and animation. You see the Mississippi at work, not only in draining its valley, but in making those two streams which flow one above the other, and create along their route an immense net-work of artificial rivers, whose function it is to water the recently deposited earth, or to lay down new deposits.

The Amazons, of which all travellers speak, is, at its mouth, nothing more than an immense extravasation of a sea of fresh water in a sea of salt water.

I have borrowed from M. Moynet ("L'Haut Amazone") my facts in reference to the Indian tribes. My compatriot and friend, M. Clamageran, has also furnished me with details respecting the Mississippi; not to forget my brother, who for a couple of years dwelt upon its banks, and saw it labouring under his eyes.

## BOOK VI.—LAKE SCENERY.

CHAPTER I.—*The Great Reservoirs.*—The tree and the glacier are the distillers of water; the lakes are its reservoirs. But even if this be the case, it is necessarily the sun which arranges our supply. If its heat traversed our atmosphere freely, it would annually thaw one and thirty mètres of ice covering our whole globe as a thick crust. (*Pouillet.*)—If its *full radiation* fell upon us, it would dissolve, every minute, sixty million cubic myriamètres of ice. (*Bunsen; Roscoe.*)

Happily, our atmosphere intervenes to protect us, and the sun has to warm other planets. The woods of the mountains also protect the soil, and store up a portion of the heat which should return to it; while they moderate, in the summer months, the melting of the snows. The waters descend to the lakes with a beautiful regularity.

Their mission is so important for the vital economy of the globe, that I have wished, in the Arno, to show the profound disturbance involved in the gradual disappearance of the forests. I have derived much assistance from Ripetti's excellent "Dictionnaire de la Toscane," and the admirable work of the Comte de Fossombroni.

For the physiognomy of the lakes, according to their different countries and their various methods of outflow, the reader may advantageously consult, as I have done, the "Géographie Physique." It is of great assistance for the lakes of Canada, whose outline and distribution are clearly revealed in the accompanying maps.

Speke, Grant, and Baker, the discoverers of the African lakes, and M. Vivien de Saint Martin, in his summary of their discoveries, have enabled me to understand the slothful nature of those waters. Throughout their course they flow very languidly, or, rather, *creep*. The reader may also refer to Bolognesi's "Excursion au Nil Blanc."

CHAPTER III.—*The Scottish Lakes.*—I turn here to my former Scottish guides, adding the name of Chambers, who has furnished an excellent description of Scotland. I must also name Charles Nodier's "Promenade aux Montagnes d'Ecosse." I should have been glad to quote some English writers, but my excellent publishers, Messrs. Nelson, to whom I am indebted for the latest statistics of the climate of their country, could not furnish me with any.

But, at all events, I have enriched myself from the books of John Sinclair, who has very clearly penetrated the character of Scottish scenery. After reading him, you feel as if you had inhabited his Sutherlandshire highlands. He has traced the physiognomy of the Shetland pony, which legend has converted into the kelpie. He was familiar with it in its native country, where, with all its wildness, it is easily mounted. Sinclair was accustomed to throw himself on the back of the first he met with.

M. Noel Nogaret speaks of the ponies of Iceland as identical in temperament. This race seems to have acquired the whole of Northern Europe for its habitat.

In the *Revue Britannique* of 1864 will be found some legends of the visions seen in the stagnant waters of the peat-bog, and on the low and barren sea-shores. The "Mermaid of Galloway" attracts you by its soft weak song, or, more properly speaking, the murmur of its caressing and plaintive voice.

CHAPTER IV.—*The Sleeping Waters.*—All travellers on the Brunig route will have seen the chaplet of the three tiny lakes, which, linked in one another, gradually ebb away, under their veil of lilies, into the Lake of Tarnen. Lower down, Alpenach, an arm of the Lake of Lucerne, is sinking likewise under its field of reeds.

These languishing waters wear, in our climate, a melancholy aspect. In the lands of the sun their dubious tints warn you to keep them at a distance.*

Their impoverishment is sometimes natural, but more frequently it is due to the atmospheric disturbances produced by the disappearance of the forests. M. de Saussure indicates no other cause for the diminution of the lakes of Neufchâtel, Bienne, and Morat ("Voyage aux Alpes," tome ii., chap. xvi.). M. Boussingault, in America, was informed by the natives of Venezuela that their Lake of Ticaragua, after having perceptibly sunk, had risen again during twenty-two years of civil war, when the forests had been allowed a breathing-time to renew and re-create the springs. In New Granada he saw two lakes which had formerly been one, and which had become separated only through a recent clearance of timber-trees.

In the plain, the drying-up of our wells and of our fountains has no other cause. At Orléans, to cite but one example, owing to the devastation of the neighbouring forests, all the wells and little brooks have vanished. The water supply has to be brought from the Loiret. (*Maury.*) In the south, this disappearance of the springs has proved sufficient to depopulate whole districts.

CHAPTER V.—*The Trembling Prairies.*—Nature stands in need of no defence, but I love to tell of all that she has done in her endeavours to purify and veil the waters which, though only slothful to-day, may to-morrow become fatal. Nothing is more affecting than to watch her maternal ingenuity, her struggles to repair the errors of foolish man.

And this, too, at every epoch; for I read in one of Pliny's letters his description of his Lake Vadimon, and of the isles of reeds driven hither and thither by the wind, sporting on the waves, contending with the current like ships, uniting together, scattering apart, and giving to the lake, when clinging to its shores, the most various forms; transporting, sometimes, on their rafts of verdure whole herds of cattle, terrified at the spectacle of meadows which seemed to recede before them, until they were landed gently on the opposite shore.

In the cold regions of the North, where no dread of fermentation exists, the peat-bog reigns alone. In Holland, the climate being milder, Nature alternates: in localities where the action of the sun is lively, she spreads out the floating meadow. You may follow its slow and patient labour in the book of M. Lavelufe, "La Neerlande;" a book which is rarely equalled in interest. Will the author permit me here

* [Thus Burton saw them in his journey across the marshes of Western Africa, over against Zanzibar.]

to thank him for his numerous fertile labours, which possess the double merit of instructing and charming you.

M. Thomassy, in his "Géologie Pratique de la Louisiane," explains the two methods of action to which the Mississippi formerly resorted in order to elevate her meadows, and cover her waters, the *healthiest in the world*, but always struggling against the adverse influences of the climate and the fermentation of every kind of *débris*. Even at the present day, when the river is clear of rafts, it is enabled by a rapid vegetation to work with tolerable swiftness. It constantly presents a very animated world. On its prairies, where man does not dare to trust himself, the roebucks bound. A less pleasant inhabitant, the cayman, brings thither his family, and speaks, or rather growls to them, after his own fashion. The *ourarous*, or bull-frogs, disport in immense herds. The crocodiles, at night, take up the bass, the frogs the falsetto, while the little green finch, suspended to the reeds or the palm-trees, furnishes a treble. Prudent, and on their guard, the otter and the opossum share the moving, shifting shores, while the giddy squirrel leaps and frisks among the cypress-boughs. "I have only," writes my brother, "to go out to the back of my house to hear *the concert of the prairies*."

CHAPTER VI.—*Why the Swan Sings no more.*—The drying-up of the waters necessitates the exile of their inhabitants. Notwithstanding their wings, they have certain fixed localities which they love, and which they quit with regret.

It seems as if the extreme North would be their final refuge.

The sea-birds are more fortunate; still open to them, at no great distance, is the hospitality of the little isles and islets. The carnage made amongst them every year does not induce them to migrate. At St. Kilda, off the coast of Sutherlandshire, the islanders kill as many as ten thousand annually to pay their rent, and their numbers never seem diminished. To warm themselves at night, men, women, and children go to rest in an ocean of feathers. Marcey frequently saw them make their appearance like so many bird-genii (*oiseaux génies*), the fresh feathers clinging to and adorning their bodies. In the early morning, the younger children look like ruffled owls.

But the birds which cannot live beside the sea, or the deep lakes, are forced to expatriate themselves to regions nearer the Polar ice. Hence the decay of the feebler species, and the irritation of those whom Nature has inspired with powerful life.

I have endeavoured to become thoroughly acquainted with the one which, despite his sufferings, still remains, in his noble beauty and unchangeable purity, the bird-god.

M. Michelet has supplied me with passages from the ancient writers, in which already we may clearly see the swan agitated and full of wrath. Greece undoubtedly tells of his anger; Virgil, on the contrary, renders only his sweetness.

In Grimm's Tales and Mythology, and in all the German legends, we meet with nothing but continual metamorphoses of women and children into swans. Heine speaks of them also in this sense in his chapter on "Popular Traditions." The true nature of the swan is not anywhere revealed. The man of the

Middle Ages has lived too far apart from the animals; he no longer comprehends them.

The Tartar legend is related by M. G. Raddi in his "Siberia." He has heard the swan on the Lake Baïkal. His voice is a soprano, which triumphs and dominates over all voices and all sounds.

Among those ancient authors, who were really naturalists, Aldrovandus—of whom very general use has been made—furnishes an excellent anatomical sketch of the swan. Gesner has collected some statistics of the localities where the bird was met with in his day (the sixteenth century). In Southern Italy the swan was found in large numbers on Lake Avernus; and Spain could count her flocks. Where are they now?

Buffon has written "The Swan," which everybody has praised, though we must put aside the chapter of exaggerated perfections. On the other hand, D'Orbigny has painted him in unreasonably dark colours, having seen him—where? In the basin of the Luxemburg, where everybody teazes and angers him, even the keepers.

M. Laveleye, again, shows him to us swimming peaceably along the Dutch canals, and allowing children to tame and beguile him. As I have said, it is to the naturalists of our own days that we owe the most accurate studies. John Sinclair has not written a monograph; but by putting together the scattered notes jotted down in the course of his observations, we grow as thoroughly acquainted with the swan of Scotland as we have known that of the Ohio. I have availed myself of them towards the end of my chapter.

Pythagoras—who was a geometrician, and therefore calculated everything—is not mistaken in seeking to prove that the sweetness of the swan's last strain is due to the length of circuit which the breath is compelled to traverse before it effects its escape. In a little book, published under the auspices of the Geneva Committee, I see that a tamed swan, whose wing had been broken, died because he was unable to return to his nest. In his last moments was heard a sweet but feeble melody. It consisted of some twelve to fifteen notes at most; then all was silent.

Aelian says the swans sing when the Zephyr blows; Gesner, when Favonius. I could willingly believe the latter. They appear to love with special affection that warm, soft, caressing wind. They spread out their wings, and rustle them gently, while they abandon themselves on the water with beautiful airs of languor. The subtle breeze has soon penetrated their feathers, and even their very bones, which are hollow. Is it not this which swells their bosom, and enhances the voluptuousness of its rounded contours? No doubt, at the slightest movement it permits the escape, with the soft air which fills it, of those long-drawn sounds, which seem a kind of dirge or lament, such as we hear intoned by the dying swan.

---

## BOOK VII.—THE SEA.

CHAPTER I.—*The Fires and the Waters.*—We have already written a book upon "The Sea"—on the Sea, considered in itself, in its infinity, and in its productions

I had not beside me, when in Italy, either our own work, nor any books to renew it in an analogous sense. I have adopted, I think, the best resolve; that of describing the scene before my eyes—the shores of the Mediterranean. Is there not something full of interest in the common action of the waters and the fires, when balancing and harmonizing their forces?

In Italy it is everywhere visible; on the very borders, or somewhat inland, towards the Apennines, on the primeval sea-coast. A *fully explanatory* map—a very rare thing, it is true—reveals at the first glance the localities where one formation has predominated over another—at least, in the more recent ages of our planet. The Roman Campagna, the Tuscan Maremma—two vast plains advancing into the sea—mark the solitary labour of the alluvial strata.

But the thermal waters in the Roman States on the coast of the Mediterranean—the *lagoni* and the solfataras of Tuscany—are constant testimonies to the existence of subterranean fires. In reference to this subject, I was present at a very beautiful lecture by the eminent Professor Meneghini. I owe to him, too, the interesting monograph on the *lagoni*—that impressive marvel of Tuscany. It shows the country as it was, solitary and wild, before a Frenchman of genius, M. de Lardarelle (now attached to the court of the King of Italy), discovered the means of employing the heat of the vapours and water in the extraction of the wealth which they contain—*boric acid* (1818).

What could the world do with this product? Nothing more than renew industry and the arts in a hundred ways.

It rendered enamels possible. Oh, that Bernard Palissy had but known the secret!

To porcelains and *faïence* ware it gives their beauty and their wholesomeness, by suppressing a dangerous alloy—namely, lead.

It makes an admirable internal lining for domestic utensils of iron. Instead of copper, it substitutes a beautiful white enamel, unattackable by acids, and as dilatable as the metal itself under the action of heat.

Cast-iron pipes or gutters, used for the conveyance of water or gases, it renders impermeable against oxydization.

All the metals owe to it their greater fusibility. And every day it is being found of greater utility in metallurgy.

Through its aid goldsmiths' work and jewellery preserves the beauty of the gold for its alloys.

In glass it has worked quite a revolution. Crystals owe to it their radiant light; glass, its transparency in its deepest tones. It is needless now to go in quest of mines of diamonds and emeralds: *boric acid* undertakes to manufacture for you all the precious stones.

It still fetches a very high price. To the telescope and the microscope it lends the limpidity, the deep glance which throws back afar the boundaries of worlds and penetrates the opacity of bodies. It preserves for ever the unalterability of these lenses, which, when thoroughly well made, possess an inestimable value;—a very rare circumstance when the mixtures which compose the glass are overloaded with lead.

If Professor Meneghini has placed under our control the spirit of the waters, the Comte de Lardarelle, in a very splendid album, has preserved their scenery. The two works complete one another: they must be seen together.

The exploration of the *lagoni* is so special an industry that M. de Lardarelle has been compelled to establish there a colony of workmen; of which he has made a small but perfect world, with its church, schools, musical conservatory, theatre, and the like. All travellers in Italy should visit this curious locality.

The *lagoni* are not very unlike, it would seem, the Bakou fires, to which we next recur. The reäctions of heat are visible everywhere. In the *Tour du Monde* M. Moynet has put on record an interesting narrative of his journey to the Caspian, and accompanied it by an illustration of the Temple of Fire which I have attempted to describe.

At the close of the chapter, in returning towards living Italy—living, conscious, with its promise of the future—I have derived my inspiration from M. Michelet's "Histoire Romaine," where the annals of Etruria are narrated with the utmost grandeur.

CHAPTER II.—*The Charm of the Dunes.*—I had prepared a comprehensive chapter, in which I had followed up the action of the waters and the fires even underneath the ices of the Poles. The blaze of Erebus in the south, of Jan Mayen in the north, fascinated me. But this distant voyage would have destroyed the harmony of my composition, and I put it aside. But I have sought to show, in contrast with the volcanic shores, those which the sea and the fresh water have wrought out by solitary action. Here France, the sister of Italy, supplied me with an admirable example. It extends this formation, unbroken, over an area of sixty leagues.

CHAPTER IV.—*The Maremma.*—In Poitou our beloved philosophical romancist, Emile Souvestre, has painted the marshes, and the influence which lingers out (*allanguit*) their vapours. He has seized the intangible; the something floating above the waters—the something which does not seem to *be*, and yet speedily takes possession of your body and soul. Brittany, his country, he has made known in all its semi-dreaminess and semi-activity. We have all read his historical romances; he has rendered us curious to visit its scenes of a peculiar nature and characteristic manners—to embark on board the *Niobe Blanche*, and glide underneath the mists.

Let us return to Italy. Pisa, which is now so healthy, and is situated at but two paces from the sea, long felt the burden upon her of the heavy air of the Maremma. It is a good starting-point in an Italian tour to visit Pisa. It was a peculiar pleasure for me that in my journey I was accompanied by the Comte de Lauza, the prefect of the province—an administrator as enlightened as able, full of zeal for his invalid charge, and sometimes exposing himself too much in his desire to serve her. His will be the honour of having his name associated with the entire renovation of the country. Thanks to his vigilant solicitude, she progresses rapidly.

CHAPTER V.—*The Expiation.*—I have related the punishment before explaining the fault. But who is not already acquainted with that history of intestine wars which proved so fatal to Tuscany? (See *Maroni*, *Grassi*, and others.) This deep disease, which Italy still carries within her, has in all ages occupied the attention of her greatest physiologists. In the last century they travelled over the diseased land, interrogating and exploring it. She will soon reply. The penetrating Italian genius has solved the gloomy enigma.

Lancisi says: "It is owing to tiny animalcules, which escape from the waters and find their way into the human body."

Brocchi: "To the miasmas, which are absorbed by the skin rather than through the respiration."

Thouvenel and Savi: "To the new compounds, which form themselves in the fermentations and the putrefactions of the stagnant waters."

Observe that the illustrious professor whom Italy has just lost is less explicit than his predecessors. In spite of his uncertainty, M. Savi's treatise, which all have consulted, throws a great deal of light upon the subject. ("Cultiv' aria della Maremma.") It shows that in Italy the volcanic soil has as powerful an influence as the sun's heat in inducing fermentation of the waters, and impresses on them a doubly energetic character through the very nature of the materials. It points out the power of the sirocco, which renders the marshes of Central and Southern Italy far more dangerous than those of the North—of Lombardy.

Tuscany, then, must be always and everywhere on the watch. A physician illustrious in scientific annals, whom all strangers gladly consult, Dr. Fédeli, informed us at Pisa that he had quite recently been called in to treat some cases of intermittent fever in localities where it had never before made its appearance. What could be the cause of this? With the unerring decision and promptitude of his glance, he saw immediately the cause of the evil. There had been no provision made at the bottom of the embankments of a recently-constructed railway for carrying away the waters. A miniature Maremma had accordingly been formed.

To resume: thanks to the active researches pushed forward in every country, Science has explained to the Italian physiologists the origin of the malaria. It is proved that the intermittent fever is due to the seeds of algæ and fungi which find their way into the human blood, into our liquids. The experiments of the American physician, Salisbury, are conclusive. In his professional career at Cleveland, in Ohio, he affirms that he has invariably detected in the saliva and other secretions of feverish patients a little alga, shaped like rape-seed (*Salisbury's* "Gemiasma"). This alga—green, red, white, or lead-coloured—he has also collected on strips of glass, placed twelve inches or so above the surface of half-submerged soils. They had been deposited by the heavy morning vapours.

One evening, on entering a meadow which led to a swamp, he experienced a most peculiar sensation of heat, and painful constriction in the throat. This he felt, on returning, to be owing to the algæ which had penetrated it. They proceeded from a soil recently dried up, and much broken and cracked by the hoofs of cattle. In these crevasses, forming small basins of moisture, the algæ were in such great quantities as to render the earth quite white.

When the mists are heavy they rise but little above the ground, and one may escape the fever by removing to a higher story in the house. It is for this reason that the wealthy in Corsica live in the upper stories. Dr. Salisbury has seen the same effect produced in houses facing his fever-engendering meadows.

Dr. Morren, having carried home some marsh-plants, along with the soil that nourished them, was speedily attacked by intermittent fever. He suspected, and searched into the cause. His pupils divided among themselves the artificial marsh; the disease soon made its appearance among *them* also.

His son, M. Edouard Morren, has addressed to me an admirable letter on this vegetation of the dead and stagnant waters, and of the still more to be dreaded mud.

Like Salisbury, he says: "The alga is the cause of intermittent fever; but to the fungus belong mucus, typhoid, and yellow fevers, cholera—in a word, putrefaction. The least violent" (undoubtedly he refers to those which are not poisonous) "content themselves with engendering small-pox, measles, and scarlatina."*

The cause, then, is discovered; but how does it act? And, in the first place, do the spores penetrate through the tissues? This has excited a great controversy among men of science. Some say they are much too large to traverse the membranes of the tissues; Tyndall and others declare that they circulate within our blood. It is allowable, at all events, to conjecture that the softness and dilatability of the tissues of fever-patients, and the almost constant moisture on their skin, may and does prepare them for the easier reception of the fatal germs.

Salisbury does not discuss the question: enough for him that he has found the algæ in the human perspiration, and in another abundant secretion. They have, therefore, passed through the body.

But how do the algæ act? To quote again from Salisbury: "They are a positive poison for the epithetial surfaces with which they are brought in contact."

Hence the final key of the enigma remains to be discovered: In what does this poisoning consist?

CHAPTER VI.—*To the Wounded Earth the Sea offers its Healing Stores.*—I have dwelt emphatically on the misfortunes of Italy, but, at the same time, have admitted that skilful physicians have devoted themselves to cure them. In the high lands, in the valley of Chiana, where the river, uncertain as yet whether it ought to flow towards the Tiber or the Arno, has created a marsh through its hesitation, the Comte de Fossombroni first applied the true remedy: he provided a channel for the rapid passage of the waters through the morass, and filled it up with the refuse which they brought down. This system of culverts is now adopted everywhere.

In speaking of the province of Pisa, I have done justice to the Comte de Lanza.

At Grossetto, the Comte de Correa, Councillor-General of the province, our amiable host, rivals him in zeal for the sanitary regeneration of his district. I owe to his kindness some valuable papers on the diminution of the Maremma. Five-

* [Professor Tyndall, in his researches into the nature of "floating dust," and Angus Smith (1854), who discovered the fungus in the atmosphere around the cholera hospitals, are also agreed as to their introduction into the respiratory channels.]

eighths of the sickly soil are now convalescent, and in a fit condition for culture. The cause which retains Grossetto itself in a condition of uncertainty, which still compels its inhabitants during the summer months to dwell in the mountain (at Scauzans), is, before and above all, the want of good drinking-water. The stale, disoxygenated, thirst-exciting water of the cisterns is a greater source of fever than the vapours slowly creeping along the remnants of the once extensive morasses.

But whenever they secure a true *running* water, which the sun illuminates, all will be won.

The nomadic reapers will become sedentary cultivators. Already, according to Giorgini ("Bonificatious de la Maremme"), the population of this (so to say) desert region has increased in the last thirty years by 29,000 inhabitants.

Grossetto, through its central position—between Rome and Florence, which to-day are reconciled—must become an important town. (See the very interesting *brochure* of Dr. Buffalini, "Sallo stato di Salubrità di Grossetto.")

The treatment is also pursued on the lake of Orbitello by separating the salt from the fresh waters.

There remain the Campagna of Rome, still untouched, and the dangerous Pontine marshes. But the Italian Government will not recoil before its task. It knows that this land, if resuscitated, will one day be, along with Tuscany, an overflowing granary.

If, as all things seem to establish, the Maremma is a creation of man and of bad laws (*Salvagnoli*), it is for the State to apply the necessary remedy. It must become, for a time, the sole proprietary. It alone can act on a comprehensive plan, can set the dead waters into rapid motion, can regulate the courses of the streams.

At a later period, the division of the lands will make the wealth of these immense plains. The Syndic of Cecina, a man of great intelligence, said to me, on observing my admiration for his young country, "This should belong to him who cultivates it,—to the peasant."

Something, nevertheless, I said to him, is wanting still. I would fain see a larger number of trees. Their absence or their scarcity saddens the country-side, and ever invests it with an aspect of depopulation. The sun, moreover, falls full upon it with its severest heat. Nothing would be simpler than to follow the Persian's precept: "At the birth of every child, plant a tree." Two brothers, the most changeable, the freest, assisting the captive rooted to the earth. In later years it would repay man the price of his services, extending over his wearied limbs the sweet repose of its shadow.

Thus many things, which would cost Italy but little, are still wanted to increase her fortune and firmly establish her future. Hitherto, it seems to me, she has not understood the value of the blessings lavished upon her by Nature; she has allowed them to lie dormant for too long a period. One example, let me give, out of a thousand. Its Etna, in itself alone, fabricates an inexhaustible mine of sulphur, which could supply the wants of the whole world. "Ah, well," said to us one of the most

illustrious of Sicilians, the engineer Louis Orlando, "we do not extract enough yearly for a population of six millions!"

Italy, which does not work the mines within her reach—under her very hand—has never dreamed, I am confident, of testing upon herself the truth of the theory enunciated by Humboldt in his "Kosmos":—

"All the southern mountains are the matrices of the precious metals. Gold in the east; platinum in the west—sometimes interspersed with diamonds."

The philosopher's assertion is confirmed by the metallic wealth of the Ural, and by the mountains of California, which have been elevated in a north and south direction.

Does not the Apennine, which is a southern chain, conceal in its bosom the veins of quartz and serpentine particularly affected by these metals?

But, as I have said, Italy's true treasure lies on the surface. Italy has only *to will*, to become the Promised Land. Let her *will* it, then. Such is the prayer of a true friend, grateful to the sister nation which welcomed her so warmly.

# Analysis of Subjects.

## BOOK I.—THE GARDEN.


CHAPTER I.—THE GARDEN: INTRODUCTORY.

What the garden which the heart loves really is ..... 3
Fortune does not bestow on all of us the more splendid enclosures..... 4
A description of the Persian "Paradise" 5
The author compares it with the garden of her childhood..... 6
Her impressions of Schoenbrün ..... 7

CHAPTER II.—THE MARBLE GARDENS.

A dream of Italy ..... 8
Harmony between its vegetation and its architecture..... 9
The origin of its balustrades and porticoes..... 9
How Fortune favoured Rome..... 10
The gardens of old Rome described..... 10
And the causes of their decay explained 11

CHAPTER III.—THE ENGLISH GARDEN.

England adapted her gardens to her climate..... 13
What Pope effected at Twickenham..... 14
Some remarks upon English predilections..... 15
These gradually led to the introduction of landscape gardening ..... 16
What the English garden *now* is ..... 17
The characteristics of French gardening 18
The French imitate the English, as at Morfontaine ..... 18
For the wilder kind of landscape gardening we must turn to Scotland..... 18


## BOOK II.—PASTORAL SCENERY.


CHAPTER I.—THE MEADOW: INTRODUCTORY.

Humboldt in the Tropics regrets the German meadows..... 23
And we have, all of us, the same partiality for the ever-verdant meadow ..... 24
The writer's garden in her childhood..... 24
Wandering to the hay-meadow..... 25
But England is the land of meadows..... 26
All about the humble grasses..... 26
How they grow, and why they flourish.. 27
The meadows of Southern France described..... 27
The precocious ripening of the grasses... 28
The work of the mower: all is over..... 29

CHAPTER II.—THE HERBAGE.

The richer herbage of the pastures claims our attention ..... 30

A dream of Southern fields ..... 31
Alas, for the happy evening hours spent in the pleasant places!..... 32
A transition to the level landscapes of Holland..... 33

CHAPTER III.—NEAR THE FARM.

The farm follows, and expresses the movement of the year..... 34
The flowers of the hay-fields described... 35
Their value in creating "artificial meadows"..... 35
The maize, the hemp plant, and the flax 36
A mixture of orchard and vineyard growth ..... 36
And along with all, the humble but valuable potato..... 37
Scenes of rural work and rural nature... 37
The live tenantry of the farm-yard..... 38
The farm here described has its water-mill..... 38
The children rejoice in the aroma of its flour..... 39
But they also rejoice in the fruit of the hedgerows..... 39
Though its legitimate owner is the Bird. 39
A certain sympathy exists between man and the animals..... 40
Hence the stork and the swallow make our house their resting-place ..... 40
And the nightingale builds her nest within reach of our hand ..... 41
And the robin perches on our window-sill ..... 41
The story of a robin ..... 42
Which died, pining for liberty ..... 43

CHAPTER IV.—THE CORN-FIELD.

The grasses love the mountain-sides; the cereals prefer the plains ..... 44
An allusion to what may be called the *human* character of the corn-fields..... 45
This leads to a consideration of its beauty 46
Which opens in early spring, and matures in August..... 46
Description of the approach of a storm.. 47
The storm comes, and devastates the corn-field ..... 48
Its desolate aspect carries us back into winter..... 48
But the labourer, never disheartened, resumes his toil..... 49

## BOOK III.—WOODLAND SCENERY.

CHAPTER I.—THE SOIL.

How the character of the landscape changes ..... 53
This change is due to the varying nature of the soil ..... 54
Influence of the cultivation of the soil on the mind and heart of the cultivator... 55
A picture of a peasant on Sunday afternoon ..... 55
Meditations on the mystery of growth... 56
All plants require their appropriate nourishment..... 57

CHAPTER II.—THE EPOCHAS OF THE TREE.

The primeval earth..... 58
First appearance of the plant..... 58
What is it? It proves to be a Fern ..... 59
The conditions under which it grew described ..... 59
Comparison between it and a coral island..... 59
Immense utility of the fern: it changes into coal ..... 60
Nature's next essay is the Cycad..... 60
Then comes the Palm—a perfect tree.... 61
It is more than a tree—the creator of a world..... 61
Its habitats: the sea-shore and the desert 62
But it is its destiny to die when it has flowered..... 63
The trees of the North considered..... 63
Their prudent economy of their forces... 64
And their absorption of the sunshine..... 64

CHAPTER III.—THE VIRGIN FOREST.

The Tropical trees do not possess the individuality of those of the North..... 65
The Baobab, for example, is but a gigantic herb ..... 65
A struggle for life is constantly going on in the luxuriant depths of the Virgin Forest ..... 66

The forests of Malabar described..... 67
Life in the Brazilian forests..... 68
Night and Silence in the Tropical forests 69
The dome-nests of the nohiégo..... 70
The terrors of the forest..... 70
The nocturnal birds of Guiana..... 71

CHAPTER IV.—THE OAK.

The Oak is the type of Force..... 72
The writer traces its growth from the acorn to the tree, and shows how it ever yearns after strength..... 73
How it seeks and obtains its nourishment 74
It lives more upon the soil than upon the light..... 75
The peculiarities of its bark indicated... 75
How it teaches a lesson of patience—to wait is to be strong..... 76
But after braving Time and Tempest, it falls before the axe of Man..... 77
All Nature mourns..... 77

CHAPTER V.—OUR ANCIENT FORESTS.

A glance at Primeval Europe..... 78
How it was covered with almost impenetrable forests..... 79
Man at first dwelt in the caverns of the rocks..... 79
He sought a place of refuge, however, in the forests..... 80
We cannot now revive their ancient magnificence..... 80
Man was so impressed by it as to make the forest an abode of divinity..... 81
Fairy spirits lurked under the bark of the tree..... 82
Hence arose the awe and terror of the woodman..... 82
The forest Elves have no forgiveness for Man, their persecutor..... 83
But the Nix of the stream is of a gentler mood..... 84
She seeks redemption..... 84

CHAPTER VI.—THE LEGENDS OF THE WOODS.

The writer has no regret for the Past, yet loves to listen to its voices..... 85
And listening to them, she begins to understand the power of Prayer..... 86
It brings Heaven and Earth into harmony..... 86
The legend of the Tree explained..... 87
It symbolizes the struggle of the spirit against its fetters..... 87
Other personifications of this struggle exist in the fable-world of the Past.... 88
As in the legend of the Wild Huntsman 88
Meaning of the higher legends, in which the victim of society is shown as having recourse to the sympathy of Nature..... 89
The Robin Hood of the old ballads regarded from this point of view..... 89
The legends of the Ardennes have a similar meaning..... 90
The pathetic story of Geneviève of Brabant..... 91

CHAPTER VII.—THE KINGDOM OF THE WOLF.

The animal life of the ancient German forests..... 92
Now represented only by the deer, the bear, and the wolf..... 93
The character of the wolf..... 93
He can endure hunger, but not thirst... 93
Possesses extraordinary muscular power 94
Has no affection for his mate or offspring 94
Has no prejudices, so long as he can *eat* 95
His long reign in the forests..... 95
Man's miseries are his opportunities..... 95
He has learned the delicacy of human flesh..... 96
The pursuit of the wolf grew into a science..... 96
At last man conquered, and the reign of the tyrant came to an end..... 97
And now he leads a Bohemian life..... 97
His close kinship to the dog..... 98
Story of a wolf that became the guest of a household..... 99
Death of Tombo..... 100

CHAPTER VIII.—UNDER THE FOREST-TREES.

Nothing now disturbs the peace of the woods..... 101
But they have unfortunately lost their old, genial friendships..... 101
Contrast between the forest of the past and that of the present..... 102
The tree in Tropical lands and under a Northern sky..... 103
The delight that lies in diversity..... 103

We pass under the shade of leafy boughs 104
The luxuriant vegetation that greets us on the forest border 104
And come upon a little woodland pool... 105
Thence we penetrate into the depths of the wood 105
The imagination delights itself with shadows 106
After the rain 107

CHAPTER IX.—THE LEAF AND THE LIGHT—THE FALL OF THE LEAVES.

It is the dream of the forest to mount towards the light 108
And this each tree effects through its net-work of leaves 109
Without heat and light the leaf could not live 109
Yet certain trees withdraw their foliage, to some extent, from the sun 110
The depth of the colour of the leaf reveals its love of light 111
As in that of the poplar 111
Varieties of foliage studied; the beech, the fir 112
In due time the leaf falls, but not before it has transmitted its essence to the new leaf-bud 113
A picture of Autumn splendour 113
But November, the festival of the dead, approaches 114
The forest bids farewell to the light, and resigns itself to the gloom of Winter... 115

CHAPTER X.—THE WINTER.

All the forest is asleep 116
Meantime Earth dreams of self-renovation 117
The pleasant scenes of Winter 118
The little magician of the North 119
The gaiety of January is sometimes false 119
And hasty vegetation is cruelly checked 119
Description of the forest when decorated by the magic touch of Frost 120
But in winter, for true enjoyment man must seek the Fireside 121

CHAPTER XI.—DISAPPEARANCE OF THE FORESTS.

How the forests arose, one on the ruins of another 122
The progress of creation 123
Appearance of Man on the scene 123
Is he the King of Creation? 123
If so, how did he attain his royalty? 124
Through his own work and the work of others 124
His most active auxiliary is Fire 124
The tree at first provided him with fuel. 124
But this will soon be wanting, owing to his merciless devastation of the forests 125
The writer rapidly surveys the disforested regions 126
As those of Spain 126
And of France 126
How man's first encroachments on the forests began 127
Progress of the scourge 128
Consequent rapid diminution of fuel 129
And yet the fireside is so necessary to man 130

CHAPTER XII.—THE HALLALI—THE STAG.

The war against the forest led to another war 131
A war against its natural denizens 132
And especially against the Deer 132
The story of St. Hubert 132
Palmy days of the Chase commemorated 133
The Stag's Complaint 133
Present condition of the hunted animal.. 135
Alterations which have taken place in our mode of hunting 135
The stag is now not *hunted*, but *run to death* 136
The pursuit and the victory 137
Let us turn our eyes to a pleasanter scene,—one of the masterpieces of Landseer 137
The Two Rivals 138
The combat: *tout est fini!* 139

CHAPTER XIII.—THE ROEBUCK.

The Roebuck and his mate 140
Their love for their fawns 141
A pleasant picture at Vienna 141
The twofold maternal passion—love and fear 142
The roebuck sometimes descends to the village *fêtes* 143
How an adventurer once made a lucky escape 143

The buck and his doe disturbed in their leafy covert ..... 144
The chase begins..... 144
The roebuck's stratagems..... 145
Will he elude pursuit?..... 145
No; the dogs are in at the death ..... 146

## BOOK IV.—MOUNTAIN SCENERY.

CHAPTER I.—THE VISION OF THE MOUNTAIN—THE HIMALAYA.

Majesty of the Himalaya range..... 149
Its great work is the distribution of the waters..... 150
The rivers break through the icy flood-gates..... 150
The mountain-terraces described; and the grand Solitary, loftiest of all..... 151
From his mighty throne he sees all Hindustan spread out beneath him ..... 152
The beautiful valley of Kashmir..... 152
Its lotus-loaded lakes and island-temples 153
A glance at the cradle of Sita..... 154

CHAPTER II.—THE MISSION OF THE MOUNTAIN.

The Himalaya reveals the annals of the Past ..... 155
Creation a work of Evolution..... 156
The Earth's accumulated forces are found in the Tropics..... 156
Her equilibrium or harmony at the Equator..... 157
The Earth's "intermediary poles"..... 157
Volcanoes act as the safety-valves of the globe..... 158

CHAPTER III.—THE DRAGON OF FIRE—THE ANDES.

The Andes compared to a fiery dragon.. 159
The volcanic forces singularly powerful in this great mountain-chain ..... 160
Some volcanoes extinct and some active..... 160
Earth's need of respiration exemplified..... 161
Physical features of the Cordilleras described ..... 162
The description continued..... 163
The valleys of the Andes remarkable for their beauty..... 164
The first glimpse of the Pacific..... 165

CHAPTER IV.—THE SADNESS OF THE LOFTY DESERTS.

The great table-land of Asia ..... 166
A glance at the European plateaux..... 167
The Bavarian table-land: its dreariness 167
Only relieved by the appearance of the stork..... 168
Hungarian song to the stork ..... 168
The scanty vegetation of the Mexican desert ..... 169
A storm in the Asiatic steppes described..... 170
The table-land and natural strongholds of Hindustan..... 171
Their poisonous atmosphere..... 171
A tragical incident related..... 172

CHAPTER V.—AT THE FOOT OF THE ALPS: TWO REMINISCENCES.

A contrast between the Desert table-lands and the ever-living Alps..... 173
A flight from Genoa to Turin..... 174
Coming in sight of the Alpine summits.. 175
Rising towards the light..... 176
A journey in the Upper Engadine..... 177
Descent of the Maloggia..... 178
On the Italian frontier ..... 179
Picturesque villages: the Village of Tears ..... 180
Arriving in Italy: towards the Mera.... 181
An encounter with two Italian children 182

CHAPTER VI.—NEAR AND AFAR—MOUNTAIN-ECHOES.

How to look at the mountains..... 183
The vision of the Pyrenees..... 184
The fascination of mountain-climbing.... 185
The Evil Genius of the mountain..... 185
Entering upon the Land of Ice: first impressions..... 186
Physical aspect of the Oberland..... 187
A gloomy landscape delineated..... 188
What is the "true son of the mountain"? 189

CHAPTER VII.—THE RUINS.

The ruins of the mountains are colossal.. 190
Remains of primeval cities ..... 191
In Asia and in America..... 191
Description of the *Mauvaises Terres*..... 192
Transition from the ruins of Man's handiwork to the ruins of Nature ..... 193
Nature's action, however, is always slow and gentle..... 193
The great Law of Nature is the Law of Decay ..... 194
A visit to the cirques of the Pyrenees.... 195
Where we see at work the three enemies of the mountain,—water, air, and the storm ..... 195
A transition to the Matterhorn ..... 196
Tyndall's successful ascent..... 197
Man's life too brief for a complete study of the slow processes of Nature..... 198

CHAPTER VIII.—THE MEDICINAL INFLUENCE OF THE UPPER VALLEYS—SAINT GERVAIS—ENGELBERG.

Delightful effect of mountain-air..... 199
A valuable remedy in certain diseases ... 200
The Alps should be regarded as a source of vital renovation ..... 200
The writer for this purpose visits Saint Gervais ..... 201
Its physical features described..... 201
Grand apparition of Mont Blanc..... 202
Journey continued to the Upper Engadine ..... 203
The approach to Engelberg ..... 203
Engelberg described..... 204
The Peak of the Angel..... 204
An Alpine picture ..... 205
The Titlis, and its dome of snow..... 206
A gloomy memorial..... 206
The heart resumes its tranquillity..... 207

CHAPTER IX.—THE TENANTS OF THE MOUNTAIN.

The silence of the Alps: whence does it arise?..... 208
Gradual disappearance of the wild goat and the chamois ..... 209
The marmots still remain: their habits.. 209
Vegetation of the Alps..... 210
Influence of the Fœhn, or southern wind..... 210
There are flowers; but what has become of the birds?..... 211
They have perished; but not through the agency of the tyrant eagle alone, whom the swallows do not fear to attack and drive away..... 212
They have fallen by the cruel hand of man ..... 212
And now the Alps are a solitude..... 213
The mountaineer has lost even his invisible friends, the Stallmaenchen..... 214
Legend of Pierre Gris ..... 215
Who ill-treated the Stallmaenchen, and was therefore punished..... 216

CHAPTER X.—THE HIGHLANDS.

1.—*The West: Ossian.*

Mountains less sublime than the Alps produce sometimes a more powerful impression..... 217
Such is the case with the mountains of Scotland, which have a strongly-marked individuality of their own..... 218
The picturesque aspects of Scotland delineated..... 218
Its west coast open to the ocean..... 218
The land of Morven is the true cradle of Scotland..... 218
There were born the wild songs of Ossian 219
In what sense Scotland may justly be called the Land of Regrets..... 219
Its Virgin of the Mists..... 219
Its ruined ocean-castles ..... 220
An allusion to Staffa and Iona ..... 220

2.—*Central Scotland: the Clans.*

Animated aspect of Loch Fyne..... 221
Its mighty arm penetrates into the centre of Scotland ..... 221
An accumulation of mountain peaks..... 221
Contrast between the glen and the morass..... 222
Course of the river Tay described..... 222
We are now in the country of the Clans 223
The Highlander in the old feudal times..... 224
The ancient minstrel and his songs ..... 225

3.—*Sutherlandshire: Solitude.*

Why Sutherlandshire is so called..... 225
Its types of animal life..... 225

Characteristics of its scenery ..... 226
The Herring Fishery begins ..... 227
A return to mountain solitudes ..... 228
The writer cannot leave Scotland without doing homage to Edinburgh, the City of the Intellect ..... 229

## BOOK V.—RIVER SCENERY.

CHAPTER I.—THE TORRENT: ITS WORK OF DEATH.

Origin of the Torrent ..... 233
How its progress is checked and controlled ..... 234
A picture drawn of its impetuous struggles 235
The terrible torrents of the French Alps 236
The desolation they work, and the phenomena they produce ..... 237
Their violence exemplified ..... 238
Changes in the bed of the Durance ..... 239

CHAPTER II.—THE TORRENT: ITS WORK OF LIFE—THE AVEYRON.

But Nature is maternal, and does not love revolutions ..... 240
The desolation effected by the torrent is due to the folly of Man in destroying the barriers Nature had set up ..... 241
The stream, properly controlled, will flow into the ocean ..... 242
The Alps of the Dauphiné ..... 242
Here we may trace the genial influence of the waters by following the current of the Aveyron ..... 243
Its gigantic labours ..... 244
"Onward, and yet onward!" is its motto 245
In journeying along its bank, the traveller of old was menaced with "peril of robbers" ..... 246
Its caverns, and their memorials of early ages ..... 246
Their meaning almost lost, but the soul of the country still lives in the *Fado*, or Spirit of the Echo ..... 247

CHAPTER III.—METAMORPHOSES OF THE WATER—THE BROOK—THE RIVER.

The first drop of dew a sign of the creation of the fresh waters ..... 248
How much the scenery of Earth owes to their influence ..... 249
Wherever they circulate, Earth blooms with verdure ..... 249
We owe to them the various foliage of the trees ..... 249
Water is a Proteus, and constantly assuming novel forms ..... 250
We see it in the plant and in the flower. 250
Likeness of the bird to the flower in its aspiration after light ..... 251
Lessons which the falling flower conveys to the human soul ..... 251
A comment upon the chemical action incessantly maintained in the interior of the Earth ..... 252
She drinks in the rains, transforms them, absorbs their elements, yields them back to the air in vapour ..... 252
Or from the rock a thread of water trickles—the Brook is born ..... 253
This is contrasted with the hot mineral spring ..... 253
The writer returns to the brook: too frequently it is dried up through man's action in felling the trees that protected its infant life ..... 254
If it escapes this catastrophe, it flows downward with a gentle murmur, and breathes and bestows life ..... 254
In the early part of its course it constantly winds and turns, as if to examine both sides of the pasture which it has made green ..... 255
Suddenly it comes to a rocky ledge, and falls over it in a cloud of vapour ..... 255
Observe that each cascade or waterfall has, as it were, a voice of its own ..... 255
Springs and torrents all hasten to the river 256
Pleasant course of the river through the lowlands ..... 257
Evening and its songs: a river idyll ..... 258
An apostrophe to Time and the river ..... 259

CHAPTER IV.—OUR RIVER:—THE LOIRE.

The river approaches the ocean ..... 260
Before arriving there, each river must fulfil its distinct mission ..... 261

The mission of the Thames ..... 261
Allusions to the scenery on its banks..... 261
It is the river of humanity..... 262
Characteristics of the European rivers... 263
Characteristics of the Loire..... 264
Picture of its origin..... 264
Its course described..... 265
What it becomes at its mouth..... 266
It is lost in the ocean..... 267

CHAPTER V.—THE WORLD-CREATORS:—THE GANGES—THE MISSISSIPPI.

How the embryos of future continents are formed..... 268
Allusion made to the work effected by the Ganges..... 269
The American rivers labour on a vaster scale..... 269
The rivers of South America described... 270
The Aturès: a decayed tribe of the Orinoco region..... 270
The Amazons portrayed as the giant of the rivers..... 271
Troubled and wonderful career of the Mississippi..... 272
Description of its immense delta..... 273
The work of the Missouri..... 274
"Mud-Lumps" and estuary of the Mississippi..... 275

## BOOK VI.—LAKE SCENERY.

CHAPTER I.—THE GREAT RESERVOIRS.

The lakes are the creation of water in motion..... 279
Their gradual formation described..... 279
The glaciers and the lakes..... 280
The lakes diminished by man's clearance of the forests..... 281
Injury done by man when he interferes with the operations of Nature..... 281
Exemplified in the altered character of the Arno..... 281
The Arno as it was, described by Dante..... 282
Present course and character of the Arno..... 283
The writer enlarges on the utility of the lakes..... 283
How Asia suffers from her want of these great reservoirs..... 283
The lakes of Southern Africa..... 284
The majestic features of the great Canadian lakes..... 285
The cataract of Niagara..... 286

CHAPTER II.—INTERIOR CHARACTER OF OUR ALPINE LAKES.

The Italian lakes described: they are all light..... 287
For mystery we must turn to the lakes of Switzerland—to the Lake of Lucerne..... 288
Its individuality delineated..... 289
Sombreness of the Lake of Uri..... 289
The collision of the two winds..... 289
Historical associations: Grütli and William Tell..... 290
The beauty of Lake Leman..... 291
Infinite variety of its shores..... 292
An evening scene..... 293
The Vaudois shore contrasted with that of Savoy..... 294
Comments on the climate and scenery of Savoy..... 295
A return to the Valais: Meillerie and Rousseau..... 296
A day at Clarens..... 297
Meditations among the graves..... 298
Epitaphs, and thoughts suggested by them..... 299

CHAPTER III.—THE SCOTTISH LAKES.

Loch Lomond and its islands..... 300
Characteristics of the burns and waterfalls of Scotland..... 301
The lakes of the Scottish Highlands..... 302
Features of the western lochs or fiords..... 303
Particular examination of Loch Lomond 304
Loch Katrine, surrounded by mountains..... 305
The islands covering the surface of these lakes are eminently picturesque..... 306

Memories of the olden time..... 307
The passage of the Cross of Fire described..... 307
Illustrative quotation from Sir Walter Scott..... 308
Loch Leven ..... 309
Its associations with Mary Queen of Scots..... 310
The lochs of Argyllshire and Sutherlandshire..... 310
The Shetland pony..... 311
In him originated the legend of the water-kelpy ..... 312
Ruined castles among the lakes..... 313
A picture from the feudal Past..... 314
The Lady of the Castle and her vigil.... 315

CHAPTER IV.—THE SLEEPING WATERS.

Of the waters which never flow, but sleep, or stagnate..... 316
The marshes of Tropical lands, and their poisons..... 317
Characteristics of the Virgin Forests, and their motionless waters..... 318
Amongst the deadly vegetation is to be found a tree of life..... 319
The marshes on the American coast..... 319
In these the peril would be great but for the purifying labour of the heron..... 320
And of the white ibis..... 321
But, in spite of all, the fatal malaria reigns paramount..... 322

CHAPTER V.—THE TREMBLING PRAIRIES.

Constant labour of the land to gain upon the waters..... 323
Reference to the confervæ: their delicacy, yet how wonderful is the work they accomplish!..... 324
Formation of the "Trembling Prairies" or "Floating Meadows"..... 324
A sketch of the scenery of Holland..... 325
A transition to the trembling prairies of Louisiana ..... 326

CHAPTER VI.—WHY THE SWAN SINGS NO MORE.

Aquatic birds abound in the shallow healthy waters..... 328
As, for instance, the swan, which is found in all temperate regions..... 328
Gradual decay of the swan family..... 329
Estimation in which the bird was held by the ancient Greeks..... 329
The swan of Fable compared with the swan of Nature..... 330
Characteristics of the Swan; his domestic habits..... 331
Explanation of the swan's song ..... 332
The writer makes acquaintance with the swans of the little lake of Pierre-fonds 333
And especially with their parent, whom she names Jupiter..... 333
She watches and describes their pastimes ..... 333
"Floating double—swan and shadow".. 334
Migration of the swans..... 335

## BOOK VII.—THE SEA.

CHAPTER I.—THE FIRES AND THE WATERS—THE SEAS OF FIRE.

Meditations on the primeval world..... 339
And on the struggle between water and fire..... 340
Influence of the igneous forces in moulding Italy into her present panther-like outline..... 340
The volcanic features of Italy described 341
As in the *soffioni* of the Apennine valleys..... 341
Subterranean fire: how utilized in China 342
The bituminous regions of the Caspian... 343
Naphtha, and the nomadic tribes of Eastern Asia..... 344
Different character of Tuscany—the ancient Etruria..... 345

CHAPTER II.—THE CHARM OF THE DUNES—THE MELANCHOLY OF THE LANDES.

The mountains regarded as the offspring of igneous action..... 346
From the mountains proceeded the streams..... 346
Which, loaded with alluvium, descended to the sea-shore..... 346

A transition to the Italian coast..... 347
And thence to the French coast, in the neighbourhood of the mouth of the Gironde..... 347
The sands, dunes, and bays of Royan and Saint Georges ..... 347
A summer "down by the sea"..... 348
A picturesque landscape, and a charming flora..... 349
The landes of Gascony ..... 350
Perfidious character of the Gascony coast 351
How grateful to the mariner the rays of the lighthouse-star! ..... 352
The dangers of the sea are greatly mitigated by the recent erection of lighthouses..... 353

CHAPTER III.—REVELATION OF THE SEA IN THE LANDSCAPE.

Recognition by man of the majesty and beauty of Ocean ..... 355
To whom was it given to seize and render these upon the canvas?..... 356
Necessarily to the artists of maritime countries..... 356
As, in Holland, to Ruysdaël..... 356
Whose genius is characteristically described..... 356
And, in England, to Calcott, Turner, Cattermole..... 357
A softer inspiration than the seas of the North afford is to be found in the Mediterranean..... 358
Whose sunlit glories have been admirably rendered by Claude Lorraine..... 359
The French marine painters: Joseph Vernet ..... 360
Paul Huet..... 361
Comments upon his principal productions 361
But Painting cannot truly express the inner meanings of the sea and its shores 363
Can this be done by Poetry? ..... 363
No; even Byron has failed, for the Infinite is concealed from the human soul 364
Hence the funeral hymn in which the sea is compared to the pelican, nourishing the world with the best of its own blood..... 365

CHAPTER IV.—THE MAREMMA.

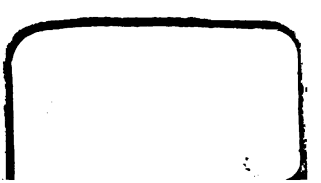
Description of the Maremma ..... 366
The landes of the Sorcerer..... 367
A journey through the Tuscan Maremma 368
Its melancholy features described ..... 368
Yet it possesses a certain beauty of aspect..... 369
Massa, the desolate city of the Maremma 370
At Grossetto..... 371
A mournful spectacle ..... 372

CHAPTER V.—THE EXPIATION.

The inhabitants of the Maremma ..... 373
Arrival of the malaria; they hasten to the sea..... 374
Who, then, shall gather in the harvest? 374
The Mantuans and Luccans, who risk the danger for the sake of the profit... 374
Ubiquity of the pestilence..... 375
The progress and symptoms of the fever described..... 376
Its agony of thirst ..... 377
The disease due to the presence of certain algæ ..... 378
But another form, originating in the introduction of a fungus into the blood, is still more fatal..... 379
Exhaustion of the race through these diseases ..... 380
The few inhabitants of the Maremma seem to illustrate life in death..... 381

CHAPTER VI.—TO THE WOUNDED EARTH THE SEA OFFERS ITS HEALING STORES.

From the suffering Earth we turn to the joyous Sea..... 382
The Mediterranean and its islands..... 383
Injury done by man in felling the forests 384
Both the mountains and the sea-shore require to be replanted..... 384
And the evils of the past may gradually be remedied ..... 385
The writer dwells on the resuscitation of Italy ..... 385
And records the lessons she learned in the half-desolate streets of Pisa..... 386
The signs of resurrection are many..... 387
The resources of Italy are infinite..... 388
She is favoured by her position between two seas..... 389
From which, in the future, she may derive a renewal of her ancient glory..... 390

## Illustrative Notes.

On Book I.—The Garden ..... 391
„ II.—Pastoral Scenery ..... 392
„ III.—Woodland Scenery ..... 394
„ IV.—Mountain Scenery ..... 402
„ V.—River Scenery ..... 408
„ VI.—Lake Scenery ..... 410
„ VII.—The Sea ..... 413